

departments, namely, to the number on strength as of July 31. However, as I think we agree, the Auditor General is in a special position and he did, in fact, advise us that he required additional people beyond the number on strength in August. Agreement was reached with the Treasury Board that he should have an increase in his establishment above the figure on strength on July 31 of this year, to the figure of 239. In this sense there has been an initial review of the establishment and he has not been subject to the general guideline set for the government as a whole, because of his special position.

May I take this opportunity to correct a misunderstanding which perhaps I created yesterday in response to a question from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Oh, no! Don't correct it!

Mr. Drury: In reply to the hon. member's question I indicated that the establishment of the Auditor General was approved under the terms of the Appropriation Acts. In fact, the establishment and the manpower figures which appear in the estimates are there merely for information and are not approved or authorized by the Appropriation Acts. I believe this was a misunderstanding which we both shared. In fact, the establishment figures in the blue book are not binding—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hees: A further supplementary to the Prime Minister. Can the right hon. gentleman advise the House why his government believes that the staff of the man who is the watchdog over government expenditures should be curtailed while his own staff, which generates most of the spending in this country, can be enlarged without limit?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest to the hon. member that his question is argumentative.

[Translation]

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

APPLICATION OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT ON CERTAIN TRAINS

Mr. Bernard Dumont (Frontenac): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Transport.

As the Toronto-Ottawa and Montreal-Ottawa lines of the C.N.R. have been exempted by order in council from the administration of the Official Languages Act,

could the minister tell us for how long, in terms of days and years, such exemption has been granted?

[English]

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): One year, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. Dumont: Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Is it the government's intention to apply such exemption to every Crown corporation?

Hon. Martial Asselin (Charlevoix): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question.

Could the Secretary of State tell us what policy and criteria were the basis for his recommendation that the government adopt such an order in council exempting the C.N.R. from the obligation to implement bilingualism, particularly on trains running between Toronto and Montreal, as provided in the decree, until 1972?

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member could find the reply to his own question if he had another look at the Act, which provides a 60-month period for full implementation. Exemptions are therefore in order, and they are always granted on the basis of the criteria of the feasibility of achieving bilingualism in a given area within a given period, and potential conflicts. The latter criterion, I believe, applies in the case of the C.N.R. who have already signed with their employees a legally binding contract which conflicts with certain provisions of the Act.

Mr. Asselin: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Did the minister recommend to the Cabinet that other Crown corporations or agencies be granted a similar exemption?

Mr. Speaker: I do not believe that the hon. member, whom I invite to resume his seat, can be allowed to ask the minister to disclose what was said in conversations he may have had with members of the Cabinet.

Mr. Asselin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I might rephrase my question and ask the minister if other Crown corporations or agencies will also be exempted from implementing the policy on bilingualism?

Mr. Pelletier: Some requests have been made, Mr. Speaker, but I would not trust my memory to list them and say which have been accepted. I might give the hon. member that information later, if he wants it.