

Oral Questions

Minister of State for Small Business. In view of the fact that the minister said he felt the growing dissatisfaction with the Trudeau government in the Toronto area resulted from the public's feeling that their part of the country is not adequately represented in the cabinet, may I ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether the Prime Minister has been made aware of the minister's statement, and does he intend to take appropriate action?

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (Deputy Prime Minister and President of Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Prime Minister is always interested in hearing about political comment.

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FINANCE**QUEBEC SALES TAX—REQUESTED WITHDRAWAL OF BILL C-56**

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I had intended to ask another question but I will restrict myself to putting a question to the Minister of Finance on whose shoulders so much blame has been laid in connection with this tax bill, although apparently he is just a boy who has to produce what the Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations require.

In view of the divisions in this country, certainly unequalled since the days of the war, and having regard to the fact that in the province of Quebec there is almost unanimity against this tax bill and in other parts of Canada there is uncertainty in the hearts of people as to what is happening to this country, is the government giving consideration to making a respectable retreat and withdrawing this bill which, if it is carried out, will divide this country irreparably?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have established very clearly that I am open to discussions, but to have a discussion there must be two people and the other party is not interested in talking to me.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, according to the press, even though the government generally does not admit the press is ever right, when the Prime Minister returns from Washington he will meet the Premier of Quebec or the Quebec minister of finance to determine what alterations might be made in this bill in order to bring about agreement. Is such a meeting to take place and, if so, how far will the federal government go in its desire to remove the strong criticism from the province of Quebec which covers all areas, including the newly-elected leader of the Liberal party in that province? Will there be a meeting and, if so, what are the terms of the Government of Canada in order to bring about agreement with the province of Quebec?

Mr. Chrétien: Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat what I said previously, that more than two weeks ago the Prime

[Mr. Beatty.]

Minister said that if a meeting would be useful, he would be willing to talk. But since that time we have not heard from the Quebec government except at the press conference on Friday when Mr. Parizeau said that he could perhaps begin to change his opinion. We have been waiting since that time to receive a formal proposition from him. I called him two weeks ago asking whether it would be useful to meet, and he said he would call me back. I have to inform the right hon. gentleman that he has not called me back as yet.

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● (1502)

PRIVILEGE**MR. BALDWIN—STATEMENT ISSUED BY JUDGE MAYRAND OF MONTREAL**

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege of which I gave Your Honour notice. I indicated that in fact I would be raising this at the appropriate time today. My question of privilege is in connection with a public statement issued by Acting Chief Court Sessions Judge Mayrand of Montreal. I understand this public statement was issued yesterday.

I do not have the statement, but I have copies of some of the wire, press, and radio comments. Included in those are several statements. One of the most repugnant to me is the statement by Acting Chief Court Sessions Judge Mayrand indicating that he "cannot tolerate criticism of the trial of Alexander Peter Treu made in the Commons last week by Alberta M. P. Gerald Baldwin".

Some of the radio comments suggest that not only will he not tolerate, but his court will not permit criticism, apparently in this House, of the trial of Mr. Treu. He bases this on statements made by myself in the House. His reference is to statements I have made in the House.

I made statements on three occasions. On Friday, May 12, under the provisions of Standing Order 43 I moved the following motion:

That this House, as the elected branch of the ultimate and highest tribunal in the country, concerned that justice should not only be done but be seen to be done, and that judicial and bureaucratic officials shall not make improper or unexpected use of laws enacted in parliament, requests that the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General inquire into and report to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs on certain facts relating to the case of Peter Treu who, after being under charge and trial for approximately four years under the Official Secrets Act, behind a strict curtain of secrecy, was recently convicted and sentenced to imprisonment and, in particular, the allegation that Treu was commanded not to discuss the case even after the conviction and was granted bail on appeal only on the same basis, and that the committee be required to consider the provisions of the Official Secrets Act which permit this kind of Star Chamber proceedings, with a view to recommending suitable changes.

Of course that proposal received the same attention from government members opposite as most good proposals do under Standing Order 43.

On May 15 I asked a question of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford), which read as follows: