

Recruitment of Francophones

I should like to draw attention to one other quotation, Mr. Speaker. It is the question which I directed to the Acting Prime Minister on January 28, as reported at page 2843 of *Hansard*.

Does the Public Service Commission have the authority to commit the government to an additional \$2 million annually over and above the regular appropriations, and does it have the authority to set aside the merit system on its own initiative?

The reply of the Acting Prime Minister is clear. He said:

As I said in the House the other day, there has been no money appropriated by Parliament yet for the next year, and before any money would be expended for this purpose not only would the Treasury Board have to approve it, not only would the government have to approve it, but Parliament would have to approve it. No money has been appropriated for this purpose yet.

The government may take refuge in the statement that money had not yet been appropriated, but the fact is that the expenditure of the money had been authorized. I also refer to the press release that the President of the Treasury Board issued on January 25:

Treasury Board President, Honourable C. M. Drury, stated today that recent press stories purporting to reveal a secret government fund of \$2 million for special hiring of Francophones for the Public Service have been seriously misleading.

Then the last paragraph reads:

So far as the \$2 million is concerned this has not been allocated to any specific program.

Then I ask the House to look at the statements which were made yesterday, February 2. As reported at page 2982 of *Hansard* I asked the Prime Minister:

—I want to ask the Prime Minister if he knows who did authorize the issuance of this memorandum and, if he did not, would he undertake to find out?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the memorandum was issued pursuant to a decision of cabinet last November.

So it is perfectly clear that the statements made by various ministers disclaiming any knowledge of a proposed plan were just not in accordance with the facts, that last November the proposal had been agreed upon and the Public Service Commission was acting under instructions from the cabinet to prepare such a plan.

As reported at page 2983 of yesterday's *Hansard*, in reply to a question by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) the Prime Minister said:

Mr. Speaker, last November the cabinet authorized the expenditure of an additional \$2 million if a feasible plan could be found.

I submit that for an entire week we sought to ascertain from the government who had authorized the plan which was under formulation and we were given evasive and misleading answers. We endeavoured to find out who had indicated to the Public Service Commission that \$2 million would be available this year and in subsequent years for the implementation of a program which would be prepared and finally approved, and again we were given misleading and evasive answers. The fact is, of course, that the cabinet had already authorized the preparation

[Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.)

of such a plan and had also authorized the expenditure of this amount of money when the plan was completed.

I want to make it perfectly clear the question of the hiring of Francophones is not at issue at this time.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hogarth: Don't look now but your bigotry is showing.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): If the government is desirous of hiring 1,250 students it has a perfect right to delineate what percentage of them shall be French-speaking, and it can say so in the specifications calling for applications. What I am objecting to is that the government has not come clean, that the government has attempted to deceive the House, that it has withheld information from the House. If Your Honour finds that I have a prima facie question of privilege, I propose, if Your Honour agrees, to move the following motion:

That the conflicting statements made to the House of Commons by several cabinet ministers concerning the memorandum on special recruitment of Francophones in the Public Service, tabled in the House of Commons on January 26, 1971, be referred to the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates for consideration and report.

● (2:20 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before I recognize the President of the Privy Council, perhaps I might suggest that there should be no debate at this stage. However, in view of the practice we have developed I think it is in order for the minister or ministers whose conduct has been impugned to indicate for the guidance of the Chair and for the information of the House their interpretation of the situation. To this extent the Chair will hear from the President of the Privy Council and make a ruling immediately thereafter on whether there is a prima facie case of privilege.

Hon. Allan J. MacEachen (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who has just taken his seat has sought to have a ruling of the Chair made that his motion raises a prima facie case of privilege.

It is clear, and it has been so established, that the function of the Chair at this point is to determine whether the allegations by the hon. member constitute a prima facie case of privilege. If that were determined by Your Honour, it would then be up to the House to decide whether in fact such privilege existed.

The hon. member has based his question of privilege on what he terms are misleading and evasive replies made by ministers of the government. He has also based his question of privilege on the suggestion that contradictory statements have been made by ministers of the government. I suggest that never in the history of this House has a question of privilege been found to be valid on the basis of conflicting statements made by ministers or any other members. I do not admit for a moment that such conflicting statements have been made, but, indeed, if they were made they do not constitute a question of