

Supply—External Affairs

Ottawa, Canada, the letter would have been returned with the mention: wrong address, since there is no minister of education in Ottawa.

If such an invitation had been sent to the federal minister of education, what could Ottawa have done? Return it with the following explanation: Excuse us, but there is no such individual in Ottawa. Then, nobody would have been invited to represent Quebecers at the meeting of the ministers of education of French-speaking countries.

What minister of the federal government could Libreville invite? Surely not the Minister of Justice (Mr. Trudeau) who was quite ready to advocate the breaking off of negotiations! Moreover, it was not a meeting of the Ministers of Justice. It was not, furthermore, a meeting of the Ministers of National Defence, of Prime Ministers or Ministers of Finance, because it was a meeting of ministers of education and there is no such post in Ottawa. The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Cadieux) could not be invited, because he would have spoken about Bomarc and nuclear weapons.

The invitation had to be sent to a minister of education. And there is no such minister in Ottawa. Therefore, the invitation was sent to the right place, at the provincial level, and it would have been a mistake to send it to Ottawa where there is no such minister. But there is a minister in charge of French education in Quebec and the invitation was sent to him.

Therefore, disagreement between Ottawa and Quebec was as unwarranted as disagreement between Ottawa and Gabon. It was a storm in a teapot, it was picking a quarrel needlessly, breaking off relations which did not exist, and that problem which should never have arisen was all in the minds of Ottawa officials. There are enough problems in Ottawa without trying to create new ones. Each minister tries to make problems for himself and it would seem that they try to outdo each other in that respect.

An hon. Member: Quebec also.

Mr. Grégoire: Now that everything is over, that everything has been done, that relations that never existed have been broken off, the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) announces that Ottawa had suggested that the invitation be sent to Ottawa, that a Canadian delegation participate to a conference of French speaking countries on education, and that Ottawa

could have appointed a Quebec minister as head of the Canadian delegation to that meeting of education ministers. Such a suggestion, it seems to me, must have been embarrassing coming from a Canadian Prime Minister. How is it that the Prime Minister of Canada has felt compelled to seek a simple minister, in a simple province, to appoint him as head of the Canadian delegation? There is something contradictory there, something that good federalists like the Minister of Forestry and Rural Development (Mr. Sauvé) could not accept. I know that the minister would not have gone there because rural development was not a topic of discussion there.

The Quebec government denied having received such a proposal from the Ottawa government, and even if it had received it, it would have found it unacceptable. Indeed, it would have been unthinkable, in my opinion, that the Quebec minister of education should accept to take part in a conference on education as spokesman for the federal government, which has no authority, no jurisdiction in that field.

In view of these facts, Mr. Chairman, I should like to say that the Secretary of State for External Affairs made a serious blunder on that occasion. I consider him competent in other fields but in the Gabon incident, he has, it seems to me, been adversely influenced by other persons. I see that the minister would like to say a few words on that subject and I conclude in expressing the hope that the Quebec government will accept the proposal made by the hon. member for Dorion, Mr. François Aquin, who said that the Quebec government, in order to correct the situation, should open a Quebec house in Libreville—for the whole of Africa—such as the ones that already exist in Paris, London and Milan. Thus, the injustice toward a small and peace-minded country would be rectified.

Therefore, I hope that the Quebec government will be able to rectify the colossal blunder made by the federal government and that the Quebec government will establish a Quebec house in Libreville, so as to represent this country in all of Africa.

[*English*]

Item agreed to.

15c. Assessments, Grants, Contributions and other payments to International (including Commonwealth Organizations and International Multilateral Economic and Special Aid Programs as detailed in the Estimates, \$1.

Item agreed to.