

Inquiries of the Ministry

Prime Minister whether he has been in touch with Premier Lesage, and is in agreement that the allocation by the province of Quebec to McGill University is "a calamitous shortfall"?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): This is a matter for discussion between the province of Quebec and the university in question. I understand those discussions are taking place.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I ask, did the Prime Minister have communication yesterday with the premier of Quebec in this connection, and does he agree that the allocation of that \$17 million is, to use the words of the Minister of Industry, "a calamitous shortfall"?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the first question might be answered.

Mr. Pearson: I had no discussion with the premier of Quebec on this matter.

[Later:]

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the Minister of Industry. Would he be good enough to table the telegram that he and the Minister without Portfolio sent to certain ministers of the province of Quebec in respect of university grants?

Mr. Drury: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out earlier this telegram was sent in my quality or capacity as a member of parliament. I wonder whether it would be appropriate both to demand the production of this kind of correspondence and the tabling of it in this house. I will be only too glad to show any member who is interested a copy of this telegram.

Mr. Churchill: How did you sign it?

Mr. Drury: In reply to the aside which came across the aisle, I signed it "C. M. Drury, M.P., Saint Antoine-Westmount".

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the question whether ministers can bifurcate themselves and start directing what a provincial government ought to do is a very important one. I have a copy of that telegram here.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, because the minister issued it to the press. But parliament cannot get that which was issued to the press. It says that the following telegram was sent by—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is the right hon. Leader of the Opposition rising on a point of order or a question of privilege, or to ask a question?

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Mr. Diefenbaker: I rise on a question of privilege, sir. No minister can adopt the attitude of pretending that he is doing something in his private capacity when he sends a telegram to Hon. Eric Kierans and Hon. R. Hyde, one Minister of Health and the other Minister of Revenue, and signs it "Hon. C. M. Drury, M.P., Saint Antoine-Westmount" and "Hon. J. N. Turner, M.P., St. Lawrence-St. George". I say they have not ceased to be ministers because they are members.

It is most improper on the part of any minister to communicate with and direct or suggest to a province that moneys coming from the federal parliament shall be used for a certain purpose, however laudable and however much I agree that McGill University is being ill treated.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, this is, of course, a very complicated and difficult matter. Perhaps some light would be thrown on the propriety or otherwise of my hon. friends' conduct when we recall, as I remember it, that when the right hon. gentleman was Prime Minister he attended a provincial Conservative convention in Saskatchewan. As I recall, he emphasized at that time that he was attending as a member of parliament from Saskatchewan.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's recollection as usual has no basis in fact.

Mr. Fairweather: A supplementary question.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am just wondering whether the Chair is expected to rule whether or not there is a question of privilege. Perhaps it would be the better part of wisdom not to rule on the question at all and to go on to something else.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put to the Minister of Industry a supplementary question concerning his telegram to McGill University.

Does the Minister think that McGill University at this moment is being discriminated against in the province of Quebec as compared to the University of Montreal or Laval University?

[English]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This question is out of order.

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: I rise on a question of privilege.