

Supply—Northern Affairs

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Chairman, I hope this is the last word. In January she received a general notice to the effect that she would be reporting back. After January there was an election. She took part in the election. She was not asked to report and she did not report.

Mr. Pickersgill: How did the minister find out she took part in the election?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pickersgill: Well, this is very important. An allegation has been made here.

Some hon. Members: Sit down. Question.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate has the floor and I am sure we would all like to hear what he has to say.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I repeat that the minister has said this lady was told to report back to work and subsequently she was told that they did not want her. In other words, she was fired. The minister says she was fired for political activity. Surely it was not just something the minister dreamed up. He surely does not seriously expect us to believe that the Liberal candidate told him about it. How did the department learn that this lady had engaged in political activity? Who was the informer? Who laid the charges against her? What inquiry was carried out to find out if the charges were true?

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Chairman, in the letter which will be tabled will be found the frank admission of the Liberal candidate that she worked as a returning officer and that he did not know that if a civil servant took part in political activities it would mean that person could be fired. If the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate waits until he sees the letter he will find the candid admission of the woman herself and of the Liberal candidate that she engaged in political activity. In a small town like Jasper you do not keep things like that quiet.

Mr. Pickersgill: It may well be that in a small town like Jasper you do not keep those things quiet and we are not keeping this thing quiet either. I know that the minister received a letter and I will not pretend that I do not know what he received from the Liberal candidate because I am perfectly aware of what the Liberal candidate said. I am also very well aware of the fact that the Liberal candidate did not write to the minister until after this woman had been fired so it was not any information he received from the Liberal candidate that caused her to be fired. It was on the basis

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

of information that came from somebody else that she was fired. Before we vote money for the minister to fire people and hire other people it seems to me we are entitled to be told what this is all about.

Mr. Cardiff: Who do you think you are?

Mr. Pickersgill: That is what an opposition exists for, after all, although I doubt if the hon. member would understand that. Before we vote money for the minister to fire people and hire others the minister should tell us on what ground he fired this individual. Was it mere caprice? On what ground was she fired?

Mr. Ricard: She was not fired. She was not asked to return to work.

Mr. Pickersgill: Yes, she was fired. The minister has admitted that the first notice was cancelled and the woman was not asked to report back to work. We should be informed where the department got its information and what investigation it carried out in order to ascertain the facts before this woman's livelihood for the summer was taken away from her. At least the Minister of Agriculture the other day when we were discussing an employee of his department who had been dismissed admitted that he had conducted a secret investigation without telling the employee what the charges against him were but the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources has told us nothing except that it was common knowledge in Jasper that this woman had engaged in political activity.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Chairman, I repeat that I did not say she was fired. I said she was not asked to come back.

Mr. Chevrier: May I ask another question, Mr. Chairman. Can we assume from the discussion that has taken place thus far that there is no objection to a Canadian citizen hired by the government for casual or seasonal work, as this person was, exercising the ordinary political activities of a Canadian citizen when not in the employ of the government?

Some hon. Members: Order. Carried.

Mr. Pearson: That is a very good question.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I am not at all satisfied—

The Deputy Chairman: Order. The Chair recognizes the hon. member for Trinity-Conception. The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate may speak again.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Chairman, could I get a reply to my question?