

INDIAN AFFAIRS

PAYMENTS TO BAND MEMBERS IN ALBERTA

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. It arises out of the decision taken by the regional office in Edmonton which affects payments to band members under the age of 18 years, under the per capita distribution program. These are funds which accrue to the respective bands through royalty revenues from resources. I would like to ask the minister why the department took this decision unilaterally and whether it is, in fact, just an interim decision, or whether it intends to consult further with the Indian bands and the Indian community before it becomes a permanent fixture?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Madam Speaker, my understanding is that there has been consultation with respect to the policy taken by the department leading to this decision. I will check to see if the consultation has been inadequate, but that is certainly my information.

Mr. Mazankowski: The fact of the matter is there has not been any consultation. It was a unilateral decision. Surely the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is not suggesting that his departmental officials have a better command of handling these funds, rather than the funds being in the hands of the parents? Surely he is not telling the House that?

● (1500)

Mr. Munro (Hamilton East): The president of the Alberta Indian Association spoke to me this morning and indicated that he wished to cover a whole agenda of matters with me. He did not indicate any lack of consultation with respect to what the hon. member is talking about; rather, he wishes to talk about a whole range of other matters which do not include this at all. Therefore I think it is reasonable to assume that perhaps the hon. member is criticizing the policy; but certainly the president of the Alberta Indian Association is not, at this particular time.

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PETITION

MR. WILSON—POSSIBLE INVASION OF POLAND BY U.S.S.R.—
REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT POSITION

Madam Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the Table the forty-fourth report of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petition presented by the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre (Mr. Wilson) and finds that it meets the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

Privilege—Mr. Lawrence

PRIVILEGE

MR. LAWRENCE—COMMENTS OF MR. TRUDEAU RESPECTING
RELEASE OF TASCHEREAU PAPERS

Hon. Allan Lawrence (Durham-Northumberland): Madam Speaker, my question of privilege relates to certain comments made in the House today by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) regarding the failure of this government to release the Gouzenko papers or the in camera proceedings of the Taschereau Commission, and the alleged failure, as indicated by the Prime Minister, by any member of the Clark administration to attempt to obtain those papers. It also relates to the actual means and methods of the previous Trudeau administration in locking up and hiding these papers for a further ten years, with no legislative authority or jurisdiction to take that extraordinary step.

As I understand the whole gist of the Prime Minister's remarks, he said that as the solicitor general and as a minister of the Crown in the Clark administration, I had the full power and authority to obtain the release of those in camera proceedings; that if I was so anxious to obtain those papers, somehow or other I neglected to do so or failed to do so, and the blame for this lay on my shoulders.

I believe that that is an absolutely incorrect interpretation of the events; that interpretation, I believe, is a falsehood. I gather it would be unparliamentary for me to say that that incorrect interpretation is false to the knowledge of the Prime Minister; therefore, I shall not go that far. But I do say to the House, and to you, Madam Speaker, that because this matter has been in the forefront of many questions in this House, both written and otherwise, if the Prime Minister did not know that we were attempting to obtain the release of those papers, then he should have known. It is obvious that we were attempting to obtain the release of those papers.

My point of privilege really gets down to the basic fact that he has misled the House today.

Some hon. Members: Order!

Mr. Andre: Tell those Liberals to keep quiet!

Mr. Lawrence: He has misled this House today and has tried to leave the impression that no attempt was made to release those papers. First of all, may I go back to the actual—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. There are a lot of conversations going on between hon. members and—

An hon. Member: It is on both sides of the House.

Madam Speaker: I said there were a lot of conversations going on between hon. members in the House. If they could carry on those conversations behind the curtains, it would be helpful.

Mr. Lawrence: Madam Speaker, may I just cite some short history, because the history of the matter is relevant to the understanding of the point of privilege.