

President of the Treasury Board on Tuesday entitled, "Special Recruitment of Francophones in the Public Service." Since the Acting Prime Minister has now had several days to look into this matter, I want to ask him whether this memorandum was drafted and circulated with the knowledge and consent of any ministers? The President of the Treasury Board has already said that it was done without his knowledge. I want to know whether the Secretary of State, the Acting Prime Minister or any other minister knew of this memorandum and, if so, which minister authorized its circulation?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have not had an opportunity of canvassing all my colleagues but I have spoken to those who might be directly concerned, namely, the President of the Treasury Board and the Secretary of State who have responsibilities in the field of the Public Service, and I have ascertained that they were not aware of the contents of this circular.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, am I to take it from the minister's reply that this memorandum was circulated solely on the initiative of the Public Service Commission? If so, 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.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have the impression that the second part of the hon. member's question has already been asked, but obviously because the hon. member appears to place great importance on the matter the minister should be allowed to reply.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, as I said in the House the other day, there has been no money appropriated by parliament yet for 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.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sharp: On the second point may I say that I for one and the government as a whole are interested—I do not know what the view of the hon. member may be—in the recruitment of more Francophone Canadians into the Public Service.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sharp: That is the purpose of government policy which has been endorsed in all parts of the country. I hope it is supported by my hon. friend and by all those on the opposite side. This policy is being implemented. We have under study a proposal which would help to effect this purpose. Just how it is going to be worked out

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we do not know yet. There is simply a study under way, and we hope that we can find some way of accomplishing our purpose.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I apologize to the hon. member. Apparently the hon. member for Egmont seeks the floor on a question of privilege.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege because I am sure that the Acting Prime Minister would not even wish to suggest by his response that there has been any change in the position from that originally enunciated when the vote was taken in the House and hon. members in fact supported that policy.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That has nothing to do with a question of privilege.

Mr. Forrestall: With respect, Mr. Speaker, it certainly has something to do with it because certain implications arise from this nonsense.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, since the policy of bilingualism in the Public Service is not at issue, may I ask the Acting Prime Minister whether the government proposes to take any disciplinary action with respect to the circulation of the memorandum outlining a program which is in complete violation of the Public Service Employment Act and seeks to destroy the merit system which has been established in this country for decades?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that in this case the merit system is at issue.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Sharp: It is perfectly possible within the merit system—this has been thoroughly supported by the bilingualism commission, by the government and by the Public Service Commission—to bring more Francophone Canadians into the Public Service. I can assure the hon. member that this government is thoroughly committed to and will observe the merit system in bringing more Francophone Canadians into the Public Service.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!