

Water Resources

in Canada are returning to various parts of the West Indies and indicating that this country is racist, would the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for External Affairs and other ministers give the required publicity and meet with the several high commissioners in order to impress upon them that this country does not follow racist policies and that it never will, so that the relationships we enjoy with these countries in the Caribbean will not be affected to such an extent that the faith they have in us now will be less?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I will very gladly take up this important suggestion with the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

WATER RESOURCES

PROVISION FOR MANAGEMENT INCLUDING RESEARCH AND PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS

The House resumed from Friday, January 16, consideration of the motion of Mr. Greene that Bill C-144, to provide for the management of the water resources of Canada, including research and the planning and implementation of programs relating to the conservation development and utilization of water resources, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: Last Friday, while the House was studying a motion for second reading of Bill C-144, the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) rose on a point of order to call the attention of the House to a difference that existed at least on the surface between the French and English texts in the preamble of the said bill.

What the hon. member said is reported on page 2497 of the official report of House of Commons' Debates of Friday last. Several members took part in the ensuing debate on the point of order and it was agreed that a ruling would be handed down later on, so that the Chair could have a chance to study the contested point.

The French text of the preamble has this sentence:

Et considérant que le Parlement du Canada souhaite, en outre, que des programmes d'ensemble soient entrepris par le gouvernement du Canada agissant seul ou en collaboration avec les gouvernements provinciaux...

[Mr. Alexander.]

[English]

On the other hand, the English text reads:

And whereas the Parliament of Canada is desirous that, in addition, comprehensive programs be undertaken by the government of Canada, and by the government of Canada in co-operation with provincial governments—

It would appear that there is a difference between the two texts in that the French version uses the disjunctive form while the English text uses the conjunctive "and". It should be pointed out that the English text would not make sense unless the conjunction "and" were interpreted as being both conjunctive and disjunctive, so that in substance there may not be any real difference between the two texts. It seems to me that the difference is more one of form than one of substance.

At the same time, while the Speaker might be expected to know something about procedure interpretation he is probably not expected to be at the same time a grammatical expert. I suggest, indeed, that it is not the duty of the Chair to interpret the language of a measure when one text appears to be at variance with or different from the text of the other official language. The difficulty is compounded in this sense that if it were found that there was a real difference between the two texts it would be difficult for the Chair to rule on which of the two reflects the intention of those who have drafted the bill.

[Translation]

During the debate last Friday, it was suggested that the problem could be more usefully considered at the committee stage, when the question could be submitted to the minister's advisers. That suggestion seems to me both practical and reasonable. In fact, any amendment to the preamble or any clause of the bill at the second reading stage would be contrary to the rules.

Is it necessary to add that, according to many precedents, a private member cannot move an amendment to the preamble of a bill. In this connection, I quote May's Parliamentary Practice, 17th edition, in particular the following paragraph to be found on page 548:

● (4:00 p.m.)

[English]

Amendments may be made in every part of the bill, whether in the clauses or the schedules. Clauses may be left out and new clauses and schedules added. Amendments to the preamble and title are also admissible where amendments have been made to the bill which render them necessary.