

Inquiries of the Ministry

[Translation]

AIRPORTS

QUEBEC—REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR DEVELOPMENT

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put a question to the Minister of Transport but, in his absence, I shall put it to his parliamentary secretary.

Could the hon. member tell the house whether the department intends to ask the house for an increased appropriation in order to build local airports in 1967-68?

[English]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): I shall be glad to look into that, Mr. Speaker.

TRADE

MARKETING OF FROZEN GROUND FISH FROM ATLANTIC PROVINCES

On the orders of the day:

Hon. George Hees (Northumberland): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hees: Is the minister aware of the problem existing at present with respect to the marketing of frozen groundfish from the Atlantic provinces?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hees: Can the minister advise the house what steps are being taken to overcome this very serious problem.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is refreshing to have a serious question addressed to the Chair.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: I can tell my hon. friend—and I hope he will not misunderstand me—that if he keeps on in this way one day he may be able to enjoy free colour television.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair recognizes the hon. member for Kent (N.B.).

Mr. Hees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, though I was pleased to receive the Prime Minister's most encouraging answer I had addressed my question to the Minister of Trade and Commerce. I think he would like to answer.

Mr. Speaker: I would rather he did not.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question in connection with this Mercantile bank business and the apparent precipitous retreat from the stand taken by the Prime Minister a few weeks ago, when he said there was not going to be a retreat but the government would stand firm. When did the Prime Minister and the cabinet take the decision to turn a complete somersault in the matter, giving the Mercantile bank five years in which to reduce its share ownership?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, my right hon. friend is, of course, an expert on standing firm. He is also an expert on cabinet divisions.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: We on this side, of course, are experts on unification.

Mr. Starr: At what price?

Mr. Pearson: I assure the right hon. gentleman that there is no division on this matter and that we will be standing firm, as my right hon. friend will find out if he is here when the bill is introduced.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I do not know how many years that will be, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: However, I would remind the Prime Minister never to take any advice from the Secretary of State for External Affairs, unless, of course, he intends to be entirely at sea.

I ask the Prime Minister this. Speaking of divisions and the patching over of divisions by wallpaper, and breaks that can not be covered up, is it a fact that there is this division? Why is the Minister without Portfolio abroad? Is it for his health or that he may cool off?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, my right hon. friend was down south a little while ago, fishing.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: I understand he had more success down there than he has had since he came back.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I have been more successful fishing here than down there.