

5. Did the government make a policy decision in regard to the future disposition of its interest?

**Hon. John Roberts (Secretary of State):** 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The Centennial Commission was established in 1963 by the Centennial of Confederation Act (S.C. 1963) and was designated as a schedule C "Agency Corporation under the Financial Administration Act reporting to the Secretary of State (PC 1964-1956)". The Commission formally closed operations effective April 1, 1968 at which time the Department of the Secretary of State assumed responsibility for all assets and liabilities. In addition to the normal wind-up activities, this involved primarily the administration of the Centennial of Confederation Fund. This fund was established in co-operation with the provinces and territories to provide capital grants to municipalities for the construction of centennial projects. This fund was terminated during the 1972-73 fiscal year and the operations of the Centennial Commission were terminated.

[English]

**Mr. Young:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**Mr. Speaker:** The questions enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary have been answered.

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### PRIVILEGE

MR. DIEFENBAKER—DELAY IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS PLACED ON ORDER PAPER

**Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in the observation just made by the hon. gentleman that the answering of 47 questions, generally asked towards the end of the record, constitutes something of approval of the stand taken by the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) and myself the other day. Forty-seven answered out of 1,532! If that represents any indication that this government wants information given to the Canadian people, all I can say is that if parliament goes on to the year 2300 we will still not have answers to these questions.

I decided to raise a question of privilege for, as has been pointed out today, and in particular by the last hon. gentleman who stated it, freedom of information is an objective of this government. Indeed, it should cover the entire field of political endeavour. I decided to look at the questions which have not been answered, and that look revealed a most interesting situation. The hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Balfour) asked a series of questions beginning with No. 1 and going up to some 40, I think the number is, which have been on the order paper since October 18.

I know the civil service is busy. I know it is overworked, with the tremendous number of official employees that it has, but it strikes me as unusual that these questions should not be answered because, after all, the answers are available. They are as simple as A, B, C. The government has all the answers.

### Privilege—Mr. Diefenbaker

I might read two or three of them to indicate their nature. October 18, No. 1:

Are private companies or individuals hired by departments or agencies for activities related to advertising and, if so, in each case, how many contracts were awarded and in what amount for the fiscal year ended March 31 (a) 1975 (b) 1976 (c) 1977?

Mr. Speaker, they have the answer to that. Why would they not answer it? Why would they wait five months? These questions will die on the order paper unless they are answered.

Question No. 2 reads as follows:

For the fiscal year ended March 31 (a) 1975 (b) 1976 (c) 1977, what was the total cost of advertising in Canada for all government departments and agencies (i) in newspapers (ii) on television (iii) on radio (iv) in magazines (v) in all other forms?

The government has that information. Sometimes I listen to radio and television. I am interested in the fact that the government's interest seems to be the interest of those who are commenting, in many cases, and their favourable comments on the government are such that one wonders if that is the reason that question is not answered.

Question No. 3 reads as follows:

For the fiscal year ended March 31 (a) 1975, (b) 1976, (c) 1977, what was the total cost to the Department of the Solicitor General for advertising in Canada (i) in newspapers, (ii) on television, (iii) on radio, (iv) in magazines, (v) in all other forms?

Question No. 4 deals with the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Question No. 5 deals with the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Question No. 6 deals with the Department of Finance, and so on. I could go on page after page. Yet five months have gone by and these questions are still unanswered. Why are they not being answered? My answer is this, that the government is afraid to answer these questions as to do so would be embarrassing to the government.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** It would reveal the degree to which patronage is rampant under this government. I will not read any more of this group. They are all of the same purport, and the information is hidden in every case.

Then we come to another series of questions asked by the hon. member for Huron-Middlesex (Mr. McKinley). These are of interest here in the city of Ottawa. There is no difficulty getting this information. It is in every department. The following are some of the questions which have been on the order paper since November 14.

Question No. 560 reads as follows:

1. How many square feet are leased by the government in the Aaron Building, 1712 Carling Ave., Ottawa?
2. What is the cost per square foot?
3. Which departments are located there?
4. Who is the landlord?
5. On what date does the lease expire and will it be renewed?
6. How many square feet are currently classified vacant?
7. How many square feet will be vacated or refitted in the next five years because of decentralization?