

Supply—National Defence

it for the wrong year. If anything could be more ridiculous I do not know what it could be.

Mr. Pearson: Perhaps I may be permitted to say a word on this point. The minister has said that we are asking this question of the wrong minister. If we had asked the Minister of Transport when his estimates were before the committee, this item could not have been included in those estimates because it had nothing to do with them. But if we had known about it and if we had asked him, the Minister of Transport at once, of course, would have said: "This is not my affair; I was merely acting as agent for the Department of National Defence. I cannot give you the information." We are considering the defence estimates and we are asking the minister to explain this transaction which occurred during last year so that we can relate the explanation to the amount he is asking this year for the purchase of land. Surely nothing could be more reasonable than that procedure. Perhaps this matter and this item could be allowed to stand until the minister has had a chance to talk to the Minister of Transport and to get the information for us tomorrow. These departmental estimates will certainly be before us tomorrow.

Mr. Denis: I am sorry to see that the present government is using the method of proscription in order not to speak about a matter which happened last year. If they have nothing to hide, why do they not answer these questions? The first report we had about this transaction appeared in the newspaper on April 15, 1959.

Mr. Brooks: The item was in last year's estimates.

Mr. Denis: We did not inquire about it. The matter is more confused. The report involves another department. Let me read from the report.

(Translation):

The picture was printed in *Le Nouvelliste* for Wednesday, April 15, 1959, alongside the following remark:

The community business has been settled. An amount of \$400,000 was paid to the owners of the lots the federal government had appropriated for the use of the defence production department.

I note that while the Minister of Defence Production (Mr. O'Hurley) is now in his seat, he did not find it necessary to rise and say whether his department had anything to do with this. All we are told is that the matter concerns a department whose minister is now absent.

Mr. O'Hurley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Denis: Mr. Chairman, we are told that this item in the estimates of the Department of National Defence comes under the Department of Transport. I think we are entitled to some information on this matter.

It is even stated in the report that this land is unsuited for agriculture, and subject to spring floods. It would therefore be interesting to know why this government has paid more than was offered by the former government. Indeed, we must not forget—and I ask the minister and this government not to forget—the speeches made in the past by our hon. friends opposite, in which they spoke of extravagance and unwarranted expenditures. However, those people have been in power and sitting in this parliament for only two years, and already we are able to point to cases of extravagance practically every day.

So it is worth investigating whether this government is actually thrifty.

Mr. O'Hurley: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for St. Denis (Mr. Denis) has mentioned my name during the discussion and I must tell him that if he relies on newspaper clippings, it will take him far! The Minister of National Defence (Mr. Pearkes) has said that the matter concerns the Department of Transport. So, I take the minister's word for it and I have nothing to say about reports published in papers like, for instance, *Le Nouvelliste*. Besides, I must add that I had nothing to do with the transaction.

Mr. Denis: Mr. Chairman, I take the word of the Minister of Defence Production. I read the reports as they appear in the newspapers. There might be times when newspapers are wrong, but there are times too when they are not wrong. Moreover, I might point out that when the report was first printed in the papers, no minister or member rose in this house to deny it.

Perhaps the Minister of Defence Production and the Minister of National Defence could consult with the Minister of Transport who, as they say, was responsible for this transaction, so that we may get the information we have been seeking on this matter.

(Text):

Mr. Pearkes: Mr. Chairman, I realize the importance of the answer to this question by the member, but as the information will have to be obtained from two or possibly three departments of the government it is quite impossible for me to give an answer tonight. I have not got the information and it will take