

Official Residence for Prime Minister

The next question concerned the coach house, as they call it. At the moment opinion is divided on that subject. Some people believe we should keep that building, while others have been pressing me to have it demolished and keep only the lower part of it for a garage. Within the next few days a decision will be made about that building.

Mr. Smith (Calgary West): You might keep it for use as a parliamentary doghouse.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I would not know what the present or future prime ministers would think of that. Within the next ten days we expect to have a decision on it.

Mr. Howe: I believe I can anticipate the next question. I can assure my friend that it will not be used as a house for the secretary.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is somewhat different from the general picture a few weeks ago. What does the minister mean by divided opinion as to the use of the coach house.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is a proper question. The government assumes the responsibility for this matter. What does the minister mean by that?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): If the hon. member reads the local newspapers he will see that one newspaper advocates demolishing the building, while the other newspaper puts up an argument in favour of keeping it. There are outstanding citizens who are interested in this development of the national capital. I have met people who had one opinion, and others who had a different opinion on the subject. I cannot give names here. I believe the government, in its good judgment—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): —will make a proper decision. I shall let my friend know what it is.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Apparently it is the good judgment of the newspapers.

Mr. Fraser: Can the minister say what the approximate cost of operation and maintenance will be per year, or has that been estimated?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I would not want to anticipate the debate on the bill. Public works will have control of the maintenance and repair of the buildings; the other part, the maintenance of the grounds, will be under the federal district commission. As to the monetary part, I think that is under the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ross (Souris): What was the original cost of this building?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I am informed that the judgment of the exchequer court three or four years ago set the cost at \$140,000.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Is this estimate given by the minister, with the \$100,000 leeway given by the member for Calgary West, in addition to the original cost?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Why, certainly.

Mr. Fleming: Will the bill cover the cost of furnishings and the maintenance of the grounds?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): We are a little embarrassed as to the furnishings. We have to put up the house first in order to see what furnishings we shall have in it. I have no estimate on the furnishings. The architect is still working on that phase of the project.

Mr. Mitchell: I just want to say this to my friend—

Mr. Fleming: I asked the minister, Mr. Chairman,—

The Chairman: Order. The member for Eglinton has the floor.

Mr. Fleming: I asked whether the bill that is to be introduced will cover the cost of furnishings and the maintenance of the grounds. I believe it was made apparent in the previous discussion that it is proposed to provide the minister with a furnished house, not merely the building and grounds. Will the bill cover that, as well as the maintenance of the grounds?

Mr. Howe: Both will all be covered by the bill. I believe it would be more convenient to discuss these matters when the bill is before the house and the government's proposals are known. It would be improper at the moment, as my hon. friend knows, to give the details of the bill. If the resolution is passed the bill will be distributed immediately, and a full discussion of the details can take place on second reading of the bill.

Mr. Green: Did the figure given by the Minister of Public Works include the cost of furnishings?

Mr. Mitchell: Mr. Chairman, just give us a chance.

Mr. Green: Let the minister answer the question.

Mr. Mitchell: I am not going to speak for very long. I am not speaking as a minister of the crown, but as a Canadian. What we are discussing now is a residence for the Prime Minister of Canada. Let us be dignified about it. That is all I want to say.