

*Motions for Papers*

For instance, let me put before the house one of the questions asked, question 1,755. It reads as follows:

1. What payments did the federal government make to the province of Quebec during each of the fiscal years 1961-62, 1962-63, 1963-64 and 1964-65 (estimated) under the following headings, in detail (a) unconditional grants (b) conditional grants (c) payments to individuals (i) unemployment insurance benefits (ii) family allowances (iii) old age security (iv) others?

2. What is the total amount of all payments made in each of the fiscal years mentioned above?

3. What is the per capita share paid by the government with respect to each of the above items compared with the per capita share paid to the other nine provinces?

The department has spent literally hundreds of hours on just this one question. And we do not take exception to it. As the house is aware, there is a rule in Beauséjour which says that ministers need not answer questions where an unreasonable amount of time is involved and unnecessary expense placed upon the public. I suggest that the Minister of Finance could properly have taken shelter behind that rule, had it been his desire to avoid answering this type of question, as is suggested by the hon. member for Lapointe. However, the answer to that question was given last Monday and is now available to the hon. member for Lapointe. As I say, I appreciate his interest in the matter and take no exception to the question, but the department has spent hundreds of hours—months—trying to answer all the questions of which that is but one example.

May I bring to the attention of the house question 1,615 which has also been answered:

1. What was the federal contribution to the province of Prince Edward Island for each of the following fiscal years, 1961-62, 1962-63, 1963-64 and 1964-65 (estimated) under the following: (a) unconditional grants—itemized (b) conditional grants—itemized (c) payments to individuals (i) unemployment payments (ii) family allowances (iii) old age security (iv) all others?

2. What is the total amount of all payments for each fiscal year mentioned above?

3. What is the per capita contribution in each category and how does this compare with the per capita contribution to the other nine provinces?

I might also mention that there was one question on the order paper which asked the government to go back 20 years and to disclose all the payments paid to the provinces and all the revenues collected province by province. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, the problem faced by the Department of Finance. It would be physically impossible for the department to answer all these questions with the staff it has; and the cost to the Canadian taxpayer would be staggering. As I say, Mr. Speaker, we are endeavouring to answer these

[Mr. Pennell.]

questions and have already made a great deal of information available to all hon. members, including the hon. member for Lapointe.

I have made reference to the fact that material has been collected within the department. This material was gathered together to assist the minister in answering questions on the order paper. It is, I suggest, a well established rule that interdepartmental communications by officials to ministers are confidential. This is a very good and sensible rule, Mr. Speaker, and a rule which has been observed in this house for many years.

In that connection—and I do not wish to weaken my argument by repetition—may I refer to one or two precedents. On January 23, 1959—I am sure this is a precedent which will appeal to the hon. member for Lapointe—the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin), now the Secretary of State for External Affairs, asked for a report of General Graham on civil defence. On that occasion the government took the position that the report was privileged because it was prepared by a member of the public service for the consideration of the government. I would ask the hon. member for Lapointe to note this particularly: Upon this explanation being given to the house the motion was not pursued. I have come across at least two occasions in *Hansard*, in which the hon. member for Lapointe has expressed great admiration for the hon. member for Essex East and his conduct in the house. I again invite him to follow in the footsteps of the hon. member for whom he has professed such great admiration and not to pursue this motion further, in view of the explanation already given the house.

Let me quote one more precedent, Mr. Speaker. On March 12, 1956, as reported at page 2016 of *Hansard* for that year, the premier of Quebec, Mr. Lesage, then minister of northern affairs, was asked to produce a copy of all correspondence exchanged between the government and the superintendent of Banff national park and the constituents of Banff. On that occasion I suggest that the minister correctly stated the well established rule which once more was accepted by the house without debate, that:

Such exchanges are, I believe, of a privileged character as between officials and the government. I therefore could not acquiesce in that part of the motion.

The minister at that time did table the correspondence which passed between himself and the citizens but he did not table the information which passed between him and his officials. The house without a vote, ac-