

Supply—National Defence

Mr. Pearkes: I have not that information. My department does not carry out the task of appraisal. When land is required for the Department of National Defence that is done through the Department of Transport. I am afraid I have not that information here. We shall have to go to the Department of Transport to get those details.

Mr. Pearson: How can we ask the Minister of Transport to account for money which was spent on behalf of the Department of National Defence whose estimates we are now considering?

Mr. Pearkes: As I have said, the Department of Transport are the agents. They would know how much money was paid to the appraisers. I would not know how much money they paid to the appraisers. I would not know the names of the appraisers.

Mr. Denis: I suppose there is no misunderstanding between the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Transport. But we should like to know whether this last appraisal made by the present government was binding on the parties—and by that I mean the government and the owners—and whether it was supposed to be accepted in advance by the two parties. I know that last week or two weeks ago something of the kind happened. Of course there was some misunderstanding. We should like to know whether here again we are confronted by some other misunderstandings between members of parliament and ministers of the crown. I wonder whether it would not be to the advantage and in the interests of this committee and of the country to have the Minister of Transport come here and give us some information as to the municipal assessment, why another appraisal has been made, what was the price paid and what was the amount offered by the previous government. I think this information would be extremely welcome and that it would be to the advantage of both parties.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I think an extremely important question of principle has arisen here. The minister is here not to account for the money he has not yet spent in the year 1959-60 but to ask this house to vote money for the year 1959-60. The basis on which we have always in the past, in my experience both as an observer of this house and as a member in this house, voted money for the current year was on the basis of the way in which the minister spent the money in the previous year and in previous years. If the Minister of National Defence will cast his mind back to the days when he sat over here on this side of the chamber and when my friend Mr. Claxton and my friend Mr.

Campney were piloting their estimates through the committee, I am sure he will remember that he did not confine his inquiries to the prospective expenditures for the year in question. My recollection of those debates—and it is very vivid—is that most of them had relation to expenditures that had already been made. The payment was apparently made, according to this newspaper publicity, in the month of April which is in the current fiscal year, but whether in fact the money left the treasury before March 31 seems to me to be quite irrelevant. It seems to me that it would be the greatest abridgement of the practices of the committee if that consideration were allowed to stand in the way of an inquiry into a matter of this kind.

The other point I think is equally important, namely that if one department of government uses another department of government as its agent but the money is under the custody of the first department, then it is the duty of the minister of the department that is spending the money to make the explanations to us, not that of one of his colleagues. If he wants to invite his colleague to come and sit beside him, rise in his place and help him to make the explanation, that is perfectly all right. I am sure my hon. friend would be delighted to have the Minister of Transport here—he is a member of this house—so that he could ask him these questions. He might like to know, for example, whether Mr. Clare was the appraiser. There are a great variety of questions that it might be possible to ask about this case. I suggest that we are entitled to have from the Minister of National Defence the information which my friend the hon. member for St. Denis is seeking. Perhaps the minister would agree to allow this item to stand in order to get this information.

Mr. Brooks: If this is a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I should like to say a word on it. I think it is a ridiculous situation where the hon. member asks one minister to comment on an item which is in another minister's department.

An hon. Member: Oh, no.

Mr. Brooks: That is exactly the situation.

Mr. Pearson: No.

Mr. Brooks: If these hon. members who are asking these questions had been on the job when the estimates of the Minister of Transport were before this committee they could have obtained the answer at that time.

Then as to the other point, may I say this. They are asking this committee to consider estimates which were for 1958-59, not for 1959-60. On both points, as far as the minister is concerned, they are asking for information from the wrong minister. They are also asking