

Official Residence for Prime Minister

residence for the Prime Minister of Canada, out of moneys appropriated by parliament for such purposes.

He said: His Excellency the Governor General, having been made acquainted with the subject matter of this resolution, recommends it to the consideration of the house.

The resolution and the bill to be based thereon refer to a matter which I am sure hon. members would wish to discuss in the absence of the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent). If I can obtain the unanimous approval of the house I would suggest that the resolution be passed now and the bill moved on to second reading, which would permit the distribution of the bill. Then perhaps the bill could be considered at three o'clock this afternoon. I understand that the leaders of the opposition parties have seen the bill and perhaps they may be in a position to agree that second reading take place later this day. However, I am entirely in the hands of the house.

Mr. Graydon: Are you trying to surprise the Prime Minister?

Mr. Coldwell: When will the Prime Minister be back?

Mr. Howe: Tomorrow morning.

Mr. Coldwell: I am quite prepared to accede to any reasonable request made by the government with respect to this measure, but I suggest that any indication that it is being rushed through might be misunderstood. I rather think what should be done is to pass the resolution and let hon. members see the bill before it is proceeded with.

Mr. Howe: That is what I suggested—that we pass the resolution now and discuss the bill this afternoon.

Mr. Coldwell: Has the bill been printed?

Mr. Howe: Yes, and it will be distributed as soon as the resolution is passed and the bill introduced.

Mr. Coldwell: I think the house would be well advised to follow the normal procedure and give the bill second reading tomorrow.

Mr. Howe: I am in the hands of the house. If that is the wish of the house, I cannot object.

Mr. Speaker: Shall we proceed now with the resolution?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and the house went into committee, Mr. Dion in the chair.

Mr. Fulton: What department will have the administration of the act? Will it be under the minister who is sponsoring the resolution, or under the Department of Public Works?

[Mr. Howe.]

Mr. Howe: Two departments will be involved. The Minister of Public Works will have to do with the upkeep of the house, and the Minister of Finance will have to do with the upkeep of the grounds through the federal district commission, and general oversight over the internal arrangements of the house. I think I could explain these matters better after the bill has been distributed.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Could the minister advise what the cost of the residence is to be, and whether or not the building in front of the house to be designated as the residence of the Prime Minister is to remain there or be removed? The question was asked whether this building was to be used as a house for the private secretary of the Prime Minister, and the reply given was that it would be leased to such persons as might be designated by the Prime Minister. Could we have information with regard to those two matters?

Mr. Cruickshank: I may get an apartment yet.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Mr. Chairman, as to the cost of the whole project, I can only say that the work is under way. I could not give a definite figure. This is an old building which is being torn down. Only the shell will be kept, and it will be remodelled. The work is under the supervision of, and according to plans prepared by, the firm of Allward and Gouinlock, architects, of Toronto. One thing I am sure of is that the work was given to the Garvoek firm at a price of \$10,000. As time goes on I shall give progress reports to the house.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What is the estimated cost? There must be some general estimate?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Those I have consulted so far dare not give an exact estimate, because in estimating the cost of remodelling an old building we are nearly always wide of the mark. I believe in the main estimates there is an amount of \$80,000, but I am sure that will not be sufficient.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What is the general estimate?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I think it will be somewhere around \$100,000—that would only be a personal guess, and if I make a mistake it will come back on me. I would rather not give my opinion. I am not a contractor.

Mr. Smith (Calgary West): Allow yourself a leeway of \$100,000 for error.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): If that is the attitude of my good friends, I would say between \$150,000 and \$200,000; that is about the closest I can come. That estimate is given in good faith, and in a kindly way.