

Montreal, instead of decentralizing, we centralize even more.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I took a stand, several months ago, in favour of the construction of the new airport on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. As I had proposed Drummondville, I thought I could depend on the support of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) since he had discussed the matter with the authorities there, and everything seemed to indicate that the authorities would take our proposal into consideration.

That does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that we are dissatisfied with the choice made by the people concerned, namely the provincial government and the Department of Transport. We rejoice about this happy event which will promote the economic development of the St. Jérôme area and the vicinity.

But I believe more attention could have been given to the possibility of selecting the area on the south shore of the river, for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce would have been more satisfied.

In any case, Mr. Speaker, we know we are going to have an international airport in the St. Jérôme area, that will serve Montreal and the province of Quebec, as well as the Canadian people of other areas who will have to use it.

## EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

### EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE EXCHANGED BETWEEN QUEBEC AND FRANCE

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two copies of the letters exchanged between Mr. Jean-Guy Cardinal, vice-president of the Quebec Council of Ministers, and Mr. Michel Debré, French Foreign Affairs Minister.

[English]

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### FINANCE

#### REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL—FAILURE TO PERMIT RECRUITMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister which arises from the repeated statement, which has become almost an annual feature of the Auditor General's report, that the failure of the

### *Inquiries of the Ministry*

government to give the Auditor General freedom to recruit the professional staff he needs, in the same independent manner as other officers of parliament, imposes a severe handicap on his work. Will the Prime Minister assure the house that the government is not dragging its feet deliberately in order to limit the activities of the Auditor General and, if not, will the Prime Minister say when the house may expect a decision on this matter, which the Auditor General has raised in his report in successive years?

**Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, my answer is yes to the first part of the question, and soon to the second.

**Mr. Stanfield:** We will get an answer eventually, Mr. Speaker.

In view of the fact that the Public Accounts Committee in 1966 recommended that the office of the Auditor General should be governed by a separate act of parliament, and in view of the statement by the Auditor General that he submitted a draft act to the government over two years ago, will the Prime Minister say whether the government is opposed to having a separate act of parliament for the office of the Auditor General, or whether it is preparing to submit such a measure to parliament?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Mr. Speaker, we have not considered the possibility of putting forward such an act imminently, in parliament. Our program is full, with other things, and I can only answer the Leader of the Opposition that I will consider this matter at a later date.

**Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has raised this subject twice in debate during the current session of parliament, without ever receiving the courtesy of an acknowledgement from the government, will the Prime Minister arrange to give, or have one of his colleagues give, an early statement of policy concerning the attitude of the government toward the position of the Auditor General?

**Mr. Trudeau:** Many subjects have been raised in debate which the government either has not had time to consider or has felt it was inopportune to consider at this time. The house knows that we announced in the speech from the throne measures to be introduced in this session, and that we have a very full