

Starred Questions

close out the account at an early date and make final payment as quickly as possible. This payment will be welcomed now particularly because western grain producers are hard pressed for cash, and they will be looking forward to government action in this field subsequent to the mass delegation coming to Ottawa.

Mr. Churchill: If I may answer the question asked by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River, I think the cheques will all be received by the farmers within three weeks' time.

STARRED QUESTIONS

ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENERGY—EXPENDITURES

Question No. 16—Mr. Forgie:

What has been the cost of the royal commission on energy, including travelling expenses, up to the latest date for which figures are available?

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prime Minister): The answer to the question asked by the hon. member for Renfrew North is that the cost of the royal commission, including travelling expenses, from November, 1957, to March 31, 1958, was \$83,387.48, and from April 1, 1958, to January 31, 1959, \$233,737.04.

SECONDARY TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY,
CAMPBELLTON—MONCTON, N.B.*Question No. 19—Mr. McWilliam:*

1. Did the government receive from the province of New Brunswick or from other sources, a request for a secondary trans-Canada highway from Campbellton to Moncton?

2. If so, what action has been taken?

Hon. Howard C. Green (Minister of Public Works): The answer to the first question is that representations were received through Mr. Van Horne, M.P., from the Chatham bridge committee that the federal government declare the highway from Campbellton to Moncton a secondary trans-Canada highway.

The answer to the second question is that no action has been taken, as the route was not designated by the province as the route of the trans-Canada highway and there is no provision in the legislation for a secondary route.

PAINTING "LANDSCAPE WITH CHRIST APPEARING
TO THE APOSTLES"*Question No. 23—Mr. Pickersgill:*

1. Did the director of the national gallery receive authorization from the government or any member of the government or anyone authorized to speak for a minister, either in writing or orally, to make an offer for the purchase of the painting "Landscape with Christ appearing to the Apostles" by Breughel?

2. Was any offer made by the director of the national gallery to any agent acting for the owner Baron G. von Polnitz to purchase this painting?

[Mr. Argue.]

Hon. Ellen L. Fairclough (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The answer to part 1 of the question is that the board of trustees of the national gallery had asked for "authorization to negotiate for the purchase of the Breughel owned by Baron von Polnitz". At the same time the trustees asserted that the necessary funds had been appropriated and were available for the purchase. This statement was confirmed by the director of the gallery. Acting on this information, which later proved to be erroneous, the cabinet on May 2 authorized the Acting Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to give permission to the director to proceed accordingly.

During the ensuing week end it was found that the assumption of funds available in the purchase account was incorrect, and accordingly on May 7 the acting minister instructed the director to suspend negotiations immediately and advise the parties accordingly. This was done on May 8 and confirmed by letter from the director to the owner on May 12.

The answer to part 2 of the question is that the director of the national gallery did telephone to an agent of Baron von Polnitz on May 2 and asked him in effect whether he would find out if the baron would sell the painting for \$350,000. The director then advised the agent that funds for the purchase would have to be approved by treasury board and provided by parliament.

It is clear that no authority existed to make a firm offer or enter into a contract for this purchase by the national gallery or the government of Canada or anyone on its or their behalf. The Financial Administration Act specifically requires that there be an appropriation provided by parliament for the purpose before a contract can be made.

It is reiterated that the authority asked for was to negotiate. Although granted in the first instance this was immediately revoked as soon as the lack of appropriation was revealed.

SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN DAM—WAGE RATES

Question No. 26—Mr. Martin (Essex East):

1. On what basis are wage rates for employees on the South Saskatchewan dam project established?

2. Are they lower, higher, or the same as rates for similar work under collective agreement in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Michael Starr (Minister of Labour): The answers to the questions asked by the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) are as follows:

1. The rates of pay are established under the authority of the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act, which prescribes fair wages;