

Inquiries of the Ministry

predecessor in this office that these squadrons would begin to be phased out this year. In other words, my announcement that four of them would be phased out during this present year was not a new announcement at all, but was just confirmation of what had been said upwards of a year ago.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, does that mean there are to be five rather than nine squadrons for continental defence?

Mr. Harkness: I think the Leader of the Opposition is capable of that simple arithmetic, Mr. Speaker.

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

REPORTED INCREASE IN INSURANCE RATES

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Hazen Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. Could the Minister of Transport comment on a report appearing in this morning's *Montreal Gazette* which states that ships using the St. Lawrence seaway this coming year will be forced to pay insurance rates which have been increased by from 17 to 100 per cent? Would the minister care to say whether this will contribute to an increase in freight costs to ships using the seaway?

Hon. Leon Balcer (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have not read the article in question. This is definitely a very important question, and I will investigate the matter.

AGRICULTURE

SUGAR BEETS—REQUEST FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Paul Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture a question based upon a statement he made in the city of Chatham, in the province of Ontario, about six weeks ago, that he expected within a few days to announce a government sugar beet policy. Is the minister in a position to announce that policy today or to give some indication when the policy will be announced in view of the fact that seeding is not too far away in Canada's most advanced part of the country?

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Minister of Agriculture): In reply to the hon. member for Essex East I would say that I am unable to give the date when the announcement will be made, but I think I can say that it will not be too far away.

Mr. E. W. Brunsdon (Medicine Hat): A supplementary question with regard to sugar beets. Is it not true that the Minister of

[Mr. Harkness.]

Agriculture is taking advice from a greater authority than the hon. member for Essex East, namely the sugar beet growers from Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario?

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the hon. minister will not take it as an administrative responsibility to express a preference.

STATEMENT RESPECTING ENLARGEMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS STAFF

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Minister of Agriculture): I would like to reply to a question asked by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate yesterday in which he asked whether the minister is making extensive additions to his public relations and information staff. The answer is no.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillingate): I wonder if I could ask a supplementary question. Has the minister seen the article by Mr. Victor Mackie which appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* of February 18, 1961, in which he says:

Agriculture Minister Hamilton is out to build up an efficient, high pressure and extensive public relations and information service for his department. He wants more publicity for his policies.

Has the minister any comment in that regard?

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer that question by saying first of all that I have not seen the story, but that I think the farmers of Canada have a right to know what this government has done for them.

Mr. Pickersgill: Could I ask the minister whether he has engaged someone from the *Toronto Telegram* at a very large salary to tell him how to inform the farmers?

[Later:]

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder, sir, if I might act as arbitrator in this geographical dispute, being about half way between, and ask whether the minister intends to answer my question.

Mr. Speaker: I suggest that the hon. member put his question on the order paper.

Mr. Pickersgill: I shall be most happy to do so, sir.

SUPPLY

The house resumed, from Monday, February 20, consideration of the motion of Mr. Fleming (Eglinton) for committee of supply, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Pearson.