

Supply—National Defence

satisfied with the offer made by the previous government they could, as is the usual practice, go to the exchequer court.

As a matter of fact, I have in my hand a report of an investigation made by a corporation which, I suggest, was hired by the department in connection with other pieces of land in Nicolet-Yamaska, and the owner, not being satisfied with the appraisal, went to the exchequer court. This is the usual way in which to appeal from a decision of the government. I am making this observation about this item because a few weeks ago in this house we had a minister of the crown who was very pleased to inform the country that an expropriation proceeding which had lasted for years had been settled quickly by the present government. However, this matter was settled quickly by the present government by means of a large increase in the amount the taxpayers had to pay.

The Minister of National Defence is telling me that all the information I require can be obtained from the Minister of Transport whose estimates have been passed. What other means is left to the opposition for getting this information? I am not suggesting that there is anything wrong in the price paid, but I should like to know when it was paid. It might have been paid in January or February, but I want to know because the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys said that it was only by accident that he was there and was photographed holding the cheque. It appeared as though he was paying the money from his own pocket. If the money was sent out nearly a month before, I would come to the conclusion that this accident was purely accidental! I wonder how this accident happened 10 days or 15 days later, if this amount of money was in Nicolet-Yamaska before.

As the minister knows, this expropriation matter concerns 265 owners. I know personally that during the last electoral campaign the Conservatives told these owners they would get much more for them; they would be as generous as could be, as they usually say, if they were returned to power. We might look at the results from two polls in this area. In poll No. 43 the minister received 85 votes, while our candidate got only 12. In poll No. 44 the minister received 181 votes, while our candidate had only 23. No wonder the present government was so generous after the election. At least there is one commitment made which was kept by the present government, but it was a commitment which resulted, in my humble opinion, in the taxpayers being detrimentally affected.

Of course, I can talk as long as I like because the minister has told me he does not know anything about it. I should like

some minister in this house to give me this information because the matter is very important to this committee. I should like to know what the amount of the municipal assessment was because, according to the report of a case in the exchequer court, the municipal assessment represents about one-third of the real value of the property.

The Deputy Chairman: Order; I think perhaps the hon. member is discussing a matter that was in last year's estimates, if I am following him correctly. If that is the case, I think it would be a matter for the public accounts committee.

Mr. Pickersgill: On the point of order you have raised, Mr. Chairman, I may say I was going to raise a point of order when my hon. friend finished because we are discussing the estimates of the Minister of National Defence and surely it is a very unusual doctrine to be told the minister cannot explain things; that we have to go to some other minister who merely acted as his agent in spending the money for which this minister is the trustee and is responsible to this committee. I suggest it is the duty of the minister to give us this information and not tell the hon. member he has to go to some other minister for it, in whose estimates the item does not appear.

In so far as the question of whether or not this was in last year's estimates, I have never heard it suggested before that we could not compare the expenditures of one year with those of another. Indeed, they are put in the blue book in that way, one year compared with another. If I recall what the hon. member for St. Denis said, this famous presentation of the cheque, this accidental presentation of the cheque by the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys took place in the month of April, so it would appear that, unless the cheque was held back for a while, this payment was made in this fiscal year. Therefore even on the narrow ground which Your Honour has raised I submit that my hon. friend is in order.

The Deputy Chairman: Order. I am sure that we ought to be able to allow the hon. member to make a comparison with other estimates; that is quite true; but we cannot debate other estimates. Otherwise we could go back and debate estimates that have been before the house since goodness knows when. That is why I was asking the hon. member to make a comparison but not to debate the item that was in the estimates the previous year.

Mr. Meunier: Who was the appraiser in connection with this expropriation?