

member for Peterborough West he said, when it was pointed out to him that an answer he gave to-day as Minister of Munitions and Supply was different from his answer on November 15 as Minister of Reconstruction, that the reason for the difference in the answer was that it had been given by a different department. Surely that was the most unusual answer ever given in parliament by any minister, whether occupying a dual portfolio or not. In other words the minister has said that what the Minister of Reconstruction knows in his private or public capacity is kept from the Minister of Munitions and Supply. In view of the fact that he cannot in any way justify what was done in connection with the sale of these Fairmiles, is he now prepared to give an assurance to parliament—and after all, he is responsible to parliament—that in the future sales made by War Assets Corporation, and particularly sales of marine equipment, will be made only after public tenders are called for? I think we have a right to ask that.

Mr. HOWE: These ships were advertised for sale.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: Oh, yes; they were advertised; and then when offers were received of sums larger than the amounts for which the first ships were sold, the higher offers were not accepted. No minister can justify that. The specious attempt made to justify it on the ground that there would be difficulty if the sales were not kept on a common level was certainly not an explanation which should appeal to the minister as a business man.

Will he now give the assurance that War Assets Corporation will not make disposals except by public tender? The greatest criticism being made to-day on every hand throughout the dominion has to do with the discriminatory way in which War Assets Corporation is disposing of the assets of this country.

A year ago the opposition cooperated with the Department of Munitions and Supply and made the suggestion that the Baruch system being used in the United States, namely the gold-fish bowl plan, should be adopted in this country, so that everyone would have an equal chance in connection with the purchase of war assets, and so that no one would find himself in a preferred position. From the complaints I have received I can state with some knowledge of the subject that War Assets Corporation has proceeded with the disposal of assets of this country with a cavalier disregard for the rights of our citizens. Instance upon instance is coming

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

to light in connection with sales and disposals being made without regard to the rights of all, and denying equality of opportunity which should be guaranteed in respect of the purchase of the articles it offers for sale. The Fairmile sales have been pointed out. They reveal ineptitude and inefficiency, if not worse. It is not an out of the way example; it is not isolated. Surely the minister is now prepared to give an assurance that in respect to sales that will be made after this date, everything is to be done to ensure that the disposal is made at the highest possible prices and without any discrimination in favour of any person or group.

The hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario has dealt with the commission on the sale of ships to the French government. The minister said that that commission was paid to an American brokerage company. He was asked who was the intermediary, who was the middleman, who was the individual who approached War Assets Corporation with respect to the offer of the French government. He answered that he did not have that information. That answer I accept, but War Assets Corporation has the answer. The minister is in charge of that corporation, and we ask him to secure that information and not to permit that corporation to refuse to place before parliament the answers to proper questions asked by members of the house. We have a right to know who was that individual; what was his offer; whether the offer was in writing; who was the offer delivered to. The minister suggests that no careful investigation was made into the circumstances of the sale because the ships were overseas. What difference did that make? That is not an explanation; the answer is simply an alibi. Let the minister lay on the table of the house the correspondence, and all the correspondence, between the American brokerage corporation and War Assets Corporation, and all the correspondence between its intermediary, if there was any, and War Assets Corporation.

Let us get down to the bottom of this, no matter how ready the minister is to stand in his place and endeavour to justify the payment of a commission of \$450,000, and regardless of the fact that he stood up yesterday and in answer to the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario said that you might save a million dollars, but what is a million dollars. That is not the attitude that the people expect of the parliament of this country at this time. A million dollars represents a lot of income tax. While the minister may smile and ridicule the saving of a million dollars, the people of this country have asked us on this side of the