

Inquiries of the Ministry

Hon. Walter L. Gordon (Minister of Finance): I am not clear as to the question. Would my hon. friend be kind enough to repeat it a little more specifically?

Mr. Pugh: Does the minister's department keep a breakdown of the revenue to the government as a result of the 11 per cent sales tax?

Mr. Gordon: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be quite a lot of misunderstanding about this tax. I should like to point out, if I may, that it is a general tax which applies to a wide variety of products. The Leader of the Opposition asked me a question the other day. He seemed to think it was a tax that had been placed on drugs by the government.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What has that got to do with building materials?

Mr. Gordon: The tax has applied to drugs for a long time, and I would remind my hon. friend that it was his government that increased it to 11 per cent.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, that kind of evasive action is the reason the Canadian economy is slipping in so far as our balance of payments is concerned. Can the minister give the intelligent answer we would like to have as to how much is realized month by month from the imposition of the 11 per cent sales tax on building materials? I understood that to be the question. Does the minister's evasion indicate that they have no such records?

Mr. Gordon: I do not know whether my so-called evasive answers are responsible for the improvement in the economy, but if so perhaps it is worth while. As far as this specific question is concerned, I would be glad to get the information and supply it to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Diefenbaker: If you had said that in the first place you would not have had any difficulty.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It seems to me that this particular matter has been well gone into.

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

WEST BLOCK—INQUIRY AS TO OPENING OF EXERCISE ROOM

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Joseph Slogan (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister [Mr. Pugh.]

of Public Works which is of extreme importance to all members of parliament. My question is prompted by the lecture delivered today to the voluntary health committee of parliament by Dr. Dudley White emphasizing the vital need for exercise in the prevention of heart disease, especially among politicians. When will the exercise room in the west block, which was ready last year, be opened for use by members of parliament?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Paul Deschatelets (Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, this question does not come under the exclusive jurisdiction of my department, but I will take up this matter with the various organizations looking after the welfare of the members of parliament and I will give an answer to the hon. member later.

[*Text*]

PARLIAMENT HILL

REQUEST THAT R.C.M.P. IN ATTENDANCE BE BILINGUAL

On the orders of the day:

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, last week I directed a question to the Prime Minister and he told me that he would look into it personally. I wanted to know whether all the members of the R.C.M.P. on duty on parliament hill in Ottawa to welcome tourists, are bilingual.

I should like the Prime Minister to tell me whether my recommendation was implemented.

[*Text*]

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I have taken this matter up with the Minister of Justice who is responsible, of course, for the R.C.M.P. He is in discussion at the present time with the R.C.M.P. on ways and means of dealing with this matter, and hopes to be able to make a report very shortly.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

REQUEST FOR BILINGUAL INSIGNIA ON NEW CARS

On the orders of the day:

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Chapleau): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Minister of Transport.

The Canadian National Railways has just ordered 500 cars from the National Steel Car of Montreal.