

Mr. FLEMING: May I point out that half of these questions do not relate to the disposal of assets, and for that reason I could not obtain the information before the committee since the questions would be outside the scope of reference to the committee. This is the only place I can obtain the information I seek.

Mr. SPEAKER: Dropped.

Mr. GRAYDON: On a question of privilege, on what ground does Your Honour say that the question is dropped without the consent of the member who asks it? After all, it is a matter for the house to decide, surely. In three or four instances this afternoon Your Honour has declared a question dropped, and so far as I know the suggestion has come from the government benches and not from the member who asked the question. Either the member must drop it of his own free will or the house itself must decide whether it should be dropped or not.

Mr. POULIOT: It is not dropped by the member; it is dropped by the Chair.

Mr. GRAYDON: It has to be dropped by the member.

Mr. POULIOT: It is dropped by the Chair.

Mr. GRAYDON: That is not enough.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that it has always been the practice, when the government refuses to answer a question, to declare the question dropped. Moreover, this matter has been discussed by the house on previous occasions; and it has been pointed out that the members who have asked questions which have been dropped will have an opportunity to submit those questions to the committee with a view to having them answered. I think the minister is entitled to ask that the question be dropped.

Mr. GRAYDON: May I rise again, Your Honour, with great deference, to suggest that if there is disagreement in the house over the question whether or not this particular interrogation should be dropped, then it should be submitted to the house for approval or disapproval. I submit that Your Honour cannot simply say that it is dropped.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would point out to the hon. gentleman that there is no division on questions, but only on motions. May I assure the house that it is very disagreeable sometimes for the Speaker to refuse what a member may regard as a privilege, but the Speaker

has no choice; he must do as the practice of the house dictates or as the standing orders require.

Mr. GRAYDON: It is also very disagreeable to the interrogator.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member will consult Beauchesne and May he will find it clearly indicated that it is the privilege of ministers to refuse to answer questions, either on the ground of public interest or for the reason that members may have their questions answered in the committees that are appointed by the house.

Mr. COLDWELL: May I ask, Mr. Speaker, what the citation is, so that we may look it up?

Mr. SPEAKER: Beauchesne, 307.

Mr. FLEMING: May I respectfully point out, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has not yet refused to answer the question. All he did was to make a statement in which he argued that the question should not be answered, and asked that it be dropped. He has not yet refused to answer it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The fact that the minister asks that the question be dropped is, I think, an indication that he does not wish to answer it.

Mr. GRAYDON: The position is clear if that is the case.

Mr. SPEAKER: Dropped.

*WAR ASSETS—CANADA-UNITED STATES

Mr. DIEFENBAKER:

1. Was any arrangement and/or agreement made between the government of Canada and the government of the United States providing that surplus war material shall not be exported from Canada to the United States and from the United States to Canada?

2. If so, what was the nature of the arrangement or agreement?

3. If such an arrangement and/or agreement has been entered into, have any instructions been given to Canadian customs officers to refuse entry of United States surplus war materials?

4. If not, why not?

Mr. HOWE: I propose to answer this question orally. There is an arrangement between disposal agencies in the United States and in Canada. It is not an arrangement between governments but simply a working arrangement between disposal agencies. I may say that there is the same arrangement between