

*Supply—Resources and Development*

Department of Public Works. Is that the position? Has the present minister no information on the matter?

**Mr. Winters:** That is the position.

**Mr. Fulton:** I wonder what I should do, Mr. Chairman. I certainly should like to follow this matter up. Should I ask that the item be allowed to stand until the minister can get the information?

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** The hon. gentleman is speaking of an expenditure which appears in the Auditor General's report. I do not know about this matter; I have not any information on it, but I will try to get any information he wishes to have. If I rightly understood what was just read, we put up a building on rented property. I am under the impression that the building is still there and occupied. If we have not renewed the lease, I hope we will come to some agreement with the owner, because we do not generally build on rented property without some guarantee or some assurance that we will have a renewal of the lease. I will try to get all the information the hon. gentleman wishes.

**Mr. Fulton:** What I am asking now, Mr. Chairman, is to be told the proper place to discuss the matter and to obtain the information. It seems to me that the item now before us would be the place to do it, because it is not in the estimates of the Department of Public Works.

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** I think there is some confusion, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member is speaking of an expenditure, and what the minister is asking for is a vote on an estimate for this fiscal year. Any questions as to expenditure we can answer, I am sure. I have not the story ready right now.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** It is the first time I have heard about it, but I am fairly sure that I could get a good story from my officials. We do not spend the public's money without having assurance that it is well spent. But I can give all the information the hon. member wishes on my estimates, or I can try to get it before that time.

**Mr. Fulton:** I should like to be quite clear on this point. I am quite sure that the Minister of Public Works can get an explanation. But while it is an expenditure, my view is that one of our duties in examining the estimates for the current year is to compare what is asked for this year with what has been spent previously, and that has been the practice as we go along. At the moment all I am asking is what would be the correct

[Mr. Fulton.]

procedure. I think this matter should be discussed in the committee; but should it not be discussed under the Department of Resources and Development, or do I take it from the statement of the Minister of Public Works that he will allow us to discuss it on his estimates?

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** Certainly. If we in public works spent that money, you will certainly have all the time you wish to discuss it in committee on my estimates.

**Mr. Casselman:** What about the chairman? Will he agree to that?

**Mr. Fulton:** Who did spend the money?

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** If I correctly understand it, it is under his estimates. We probably had a transfer of funds in the putting up of this building. We are responsible for putting up the building and renting the land. I am glad the hon. gentleman has given me this advance notice so that I will be well prepared when he brings the matter before the committee on my estimates.

**Mr. Drew:** This whole group of estimates covers undoubtedly one of the most important activities of the new department whose estimates are under consideration. This afternoon the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe raised a point that I believe should be given earnest consideration and one which calls for a plan of co-operative effort between this department and the provincial departments which are handling the problem of forest protection, particularly the prevention of fires. This subject was discussed briefly on an earlier occasion. I wish, however, to emphasize the point that no matter how carefully plans may be drawn to ensure the perpetuity of the forest crop by the ordinary cutting methods, those plans will be defeated and there will be continuity of the forest threat unless more effective measures can be taken to prevent the tremendous devastation by fire that occurs each year. It is doubtful whether it is possible to prevent fires, but there is no question about it that a large percentage of all fires are preventable and a large percentage of all fires can be stopped in the early stages if the proper steps are taken just after the fire has broken out.

The prevention of fire is something that can well be considered on a wider basis than a division of areas by provinces. Some of the provinces now have effective fire protection services of their own. Other provinces are not able to maintain the fleet of aircraft necessary for that purpose. There is not a single province, however, that would not benefit greatly by some arrangement under