

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

banks, commercial institutions and ordinary people as well as coin collectors. It was impossible to get hold of these coins.

When I first made my inquiries the minister replied that regional distribution was not good. I brought it up several more times as I was interested more specifically in the total amount of centennial coinage turned out by the mint as against the total amount of old coinage.

The minister's answer to that question was that this year commercial shipments had been in excess of new centennial coinage by 42 per cent over regular coinage of 1966. If that is so, very little of it ever found its way into people's hands. I am referring to actual shipments. I have asked many people in banks and various stores across the country whether they had seen these new coins, and many of them had not even had a peek at a penny.

● (10:20 p.m.)

There is no question in my mind that there has been a serious shortage. I do not care what the minister's figures are. I tried to follow up my question about the 42 per cent increase this year with a supplementary and to ask whether the centennial coinage was proportionate to the ordinary minted new coinage, but I received no answer. Perhaps I will get one tonight.

Then to cap it all, Mr. Speaker, today I asked the minister whether the mint had cut off the supply of coinage. I asked the same question in not just one or two but a number of banks, and I was told: "We have not seen any new coins for the last three or four months". This has been the answer I received in many branch banks, and one of the main branches in Ottawa even went further than that. They have not seen any despite the fact they have probably asked for them. I take it that the normal currency outlet for new coinage is the banking institutions.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, today I asked the minister whether production of this centennial coinage had been cut off at the mint, and his answer was no, but in fact the intention was to supply currency needs with 1967 coinage and not to carry the design forward into 1968.

The sort of question I am asked in correspondence and other media is: Where is this coinage? We have all heard lots of stories about large shipments going here, there and everywhere. If you apply for new coinage in

sets, you are told you can get new coinage in sets from the mint. But this is only soft pedalling the question. I am talking about 1967 coinage for the normal use of the people of Canada.

I do not know whether there is any answer or whether the government intends to push the mint and to tell them to grind it out. Or perhaps they will just stick to the coin sets. But the fact of the matter is that very few of these new 1967 centennial coins have been issued and are in circulation in Canada.

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the question put by my hon. friend, we did make an inquiry of the mint and I am glad to reply that the mint has been manufacturing and will continue to manufacture coins bearing the centennial wild life designs until December 31, 1967. These coins will be distributed across the nation through the agencies of the Bank of Canada.

At the present time the mint has three full shifts employed in the coining and medal division. It is turning out approximately 12 million pieces per week of the various denominations. This is supposed to be sufficient to meet the requirements of the public.

They assure me that the procedure is to distribute the coins across the country in the normal manner. I do not know whether people such as collectors intervene in this process, but they do manufacture 12 million pieces per week and should be able to satisfy the demand. They cannot do more than this. As I say, they are working three shifts a day, so the mint is doing its best.

The matter raised by the hon. member tonight will be studied, and I hope that all those who want these new coins will be able to get them before the end of the year.

Mr. Pugh: Might I ask the minister a question? Could he say how long this production of three shifts has been going on?

Mr. Chrétien: For this design they would continue to the last day of the year, December 31.

Mr. Pugh: When did it start?

Mr. Chrétien: I cannot tell you, but they probably started at the beginning of the year.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 10.27 p.m.