

Inquiries of the Ministry

made to Prince Edward Island under the tax rental agreements, has the government given any consideration to changing the terms of that agreement?

Hon. W. E. Harris (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the quarterly payments which were due under the tax rental agreements in the latter part of the fiscal year were in several cases considerably lower than the provincial governments concerned expected. In the case of Prince Edward Island they had been overpaid to the extent of \$1,141,103.80 over the period of the five-year agreement. Consequently that amount was deducted from the final payment.

The government of the province of Prince Edward Island has made representations, with the result that it has been decided that we would pay the full amount of the quarterly payment that was expected and recover the deduction over the course of the term of the present agreement. That offer is, of course, open to any other provincial government which had a similar deduction.

NATIONAL DEFENCE**PROPOSED CONSTITUTION OF THREE NEW FIGHTER SQUADRONS**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. D. S. Harkness (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of National Defence. In view of the fact that no mention is made in the green book on defence, which the minister tabled yesterday, of the three new fighter squadrons for the defence of Canada which the minister stated last year were to be constituted, can the minister tell us whether the plan for these three new fighter squadrons has now been abandoned? If not, what is the situation with regard to the matter?

Hon. R. O. Campney (Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, the plans to provide the three additional fighter squadrons to which my hon. friend has referred have not been abandoned, but they have had to be postponed for some time for a number of reasons, the principal one of which is that we have extended the NATO air training scheme for another year to take care of 360 West German pilots and certain other pilots from some of the smaller countries. The provision of these three fighter squadrons was tied up with the reorganization of the training scheme and there will be some delay, but they are not being abandoned.

Mr. Harkness: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister indicate when [Mr. MacNaught.]

the constitution of these three fighter squadrons will be proceeded with?

Mr. Campney: No, Mr. Speaker; at the moment I cannot give definite dates.

THE SENATE**INQUIRY AS TO FILLING OF VACANCIES**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Prime Minister. With the approach of the end of this parliament, and having regard to the number of vacancies in the Senate, is it the intention of the Prime Minister, under whose jurisdiction the appointments come, to make any appointments before the writs are issued or after the writs are issued but before election day?

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): There is no intention to make any appointments before the writs are issued, because I hope the writs will be issued tomorrow, and it is not intended to have any appointments made in the meantime. As to whether or not there will be appointments made between the issue of the writs and the date of election, I would not like to make any commitment one way or the other. There is one particular possible appointment that has been under consideration for a number of months, and with respect to which I would not anticipate that it would be possible to proceed before the date of the election. There might be others. That will depend upon whether I should find it in the public interest that I should take the responsibility, not of making the appointments but of recommending the appointments, in accordance with constitutional practice.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is a distinction without a difference. In view of the fact that the Prime Minister has said that the writs are going to be issued tomorrow—

Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East): I hope.

Mr. Diefenbaker:—will he now let the house in on the very open secret of the date of the election?

Mr. St. Laurent (Quebec East): Mr. Speaker, it is not an open or closed secret. I have stated in the house, and it is still the situation, that I hope this session can be prorogued either today or tomorrow. It is then my intention to recommend dissolution immediately after the prorogation of parliament, and if dissolution can take place this week it will be possible to have the election on June 10.