

accounts, and will be seen when the auditor general lays his report on the table. They would form a large part of the public accounts I would lay on the table. I have been here for sixteen years, and I cannot recall one occasion when the Minister of Public Works has been asked to give the details of expenditures for furniture. But if any hon. member wishes any specific case, all he has to do is ask and we will answer.

Mr. FULTON: He has just asked.

Mr. FOURNIER (Hull): The public accounts are laid on the table in the regular way, according to law. I could stand here and read them, or ask my officials to prepare a list of them during the week, showing the amounts and names. I would do so, and with pleasure, but it would take a long time to get it ready. It would take some considerable time to get every item for furniture. But I am ready to give the information on any particular item which would be requested, and I am ready to have the whole thing tabled. But to read it in the house—why, it is a volume of several hundred pages.

Mr. MacINNIS: The committee is not asking the Minister of Public Works to give a detailed statement of every item in the \$300,000. The hon. member for Lake Centre asked for the division among the various departments of government.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: Correct.

Mr. MacINNIS: In my experience in the house no minister has refused to give a breakdown of the items in his estimates. Hon. members are entitled to that information. We do not want every item—every screw, and nail and hook.

Mr. FOURNIER (Hull): I think the hon. member is right, and in that connection I am trying to recall one item. Not long ago I bought about \$19,000 or \$20,000 worth of filing cabinets. These are kept in the stockroom of the Department of Public Works. We buy certain things in lots. I can hardly tell hon. members how many of these filing cabinets will go out in the next week or the next two weeks to this department or to that one. When the year is over and the accounts are made up, the information is in the public accounts.

Mr. MacINNIS: And that is what we are asking for, for the last year.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: What about 1945-46?

Mr. FOURNIER (Hull): I do not think that at this time the compilation of public

accounts for last year will be ready. When the auditor general makes his report, it will be tabled.

If we buy fifty or sixty desks they are put into the stockroom. When a department requests to have a desk of one type, we send it. We think we are operating on good business principles when we buy in quantities rather than singly, because in this way we buy for better prices.

How could we divide up those desks, and say what would be asked for, from month to month, to March 31? I am ready to answer any question, if it is at all possible to answer them. I shall try to explain how this is done, but I do not know how I can explain that these filing cabinets will be requested by one department or another.

Mr. MACDONNELL (Muskoka-Ontario): I grow more and more surprised that the minister is not prepared to give these figures. I wish to remind the committee that I think it is only fair to say it was the minister's own statement which first of all made us feel queer. In effect he said that these things were put up to him, but he could not do much about the matter. Then he went on to mention this committee of economy which, I am bound to say, seems a most extraordinary committee of economy, because apparently any evidence which is not very great, but any we have up to the present would indicate that it prevents the ordinary routine of common sense from taking place. That is to say, those who have shall give to those who have not.

Next we had an appeal from the Minister of Veterans Affairs, in true highland style, in which he asked the hon. member for Lake Centre to withdraw his amendment on the ground that to a great extent this furniture had gone to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

I submit it is a most reasonable request for us to ask for a breakdown, and I wish to say again that all of this really traces back to the minister's own obvious discomfort with the situation in which he found himself. That is the way I understood the import of the minister's remarks, and that is the way I think it is.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Question.

Mr. FRASER: Is any of this money going to refurnish the new theatre the film board is putting up? They have two theatres. They are tearing down one and rebuilding one.

Mr. FOURNIER (Hull): That is an outside corporation. I am not purchasing for the film board.