

details I should have been only too pleased to secure the information for him. I shall be quite ready, however, to obtain any information he may desire, and send it to him.

Mr. DONNELLY: I have asked for the production of papers, and I think production should have been made before this item came up for discussion.

Mr. MURPHY: How long has the request for information been on the order paper?

Mr. DONNELLY: A week or ten days.

Mr. MURPHY: Undoubtedly the information is being secured from the inspector who made the arrangement. The necessary time has not elapsed for the information to come from Regina.

Mr. WEIR (Macdonald): I should like to ask a question concerning a condition existing in one of the reserves in Manitoba. Perhaps the minister may be in a better position to answer if I state the circumstances. The merchants at certain Indian reserves in Manitoba have been doing business with the Indians, and to-day they find themselves holding several accounts for which Indians are responsible, and which the merchants are unable to collect. Is there any method by which the department becomes responsible for accounts incurred by Indians? I am referring particularly to the Swan Lake Indian reserve.

Mr. MURPHY: Any goods bought by the Indian department through properly appointed and qualified officials will be paid for by the department. But as to accounts incurred with a dealer by individual Indians the department does not hold itself responsible for payment. There was a practice, which to some extent has been discontinued, whereby an Indian agent would sign an order or agree that a merchant might charge to an Indian certain goods and he, the agent, out of the proceeds of the Indian's crop would endeavour to pay the merchant. I believe a difficulty has arisen in the particular case to which the hon. member for Macdonald has referred. I may say representations have been made to the department with regard to accounts owing to merchants and dealers by Indians in the Swan Lake area. Some of the accounts have been submitted to me to show that the goods were charged and in most instances the accounts bore the signature of the farm instructor. These goods, however, were charged not to the Indian department but to the individual Indian. In such cases the merchants must have understood, through general prac-

tice, that the goods would be paid for out of proceeds from the Indian's crop, and not by the department.

Mr. WEIR (Macdonald): Does the minister mean the Indian's crop was not sufficient to pay for these goods?

Mr. MURPHY: Apparently so, yes. The agent would endeavour to pay the account, but I do not suppose he would take all the proceeds of the crop to pay an account, and leave the Indian with nothing. It is evident that during the last few years the Indians have found themselves in the same position as many white people who have been unable to pay their store accounts.

Mr. WEIR (Macdonald): The department assumes no responsibility for accounts in that position?

Mr. MURPHY: No, the department assumes no responsibility. The agent, however, acting as an official of the department, uses his best efforts to get enough money from the Indian to pay the account.

Mr. VALLANCE: Can the minister answer a query in the form of a telegram I sent to him yesterday regarding the supplying of flour to Indians in Battleford? The purchasing agent asked for tenders, and my information is that tenders were received, a local miller in the town of Battleford being lowest. For some unknown reason his tender was rejected. I should like to know if the minister has any information in the matter.

Mr. MURPHY: The telegram to which the hon. member has referred was placed before me either last evening or this morning. The hon. member has stated that the tender was rejected; the telegram however did not so state, but merely mentioned the circumstances. Is the hon. member correct when he states the offer was refused?

Mr. VALLANCE: All I am referring to is the telegram. Having a copy of the telegram, the minister has knowledge of what it contains. Is the statement in the telegram correct, that an effort was being made to transfer the filling of the order to someone other than the lowest tenderer? That is what I want to know.

Mr. MURPHY: That is a different statement.

Mr. VALLANCE: The same thing.

Mr. MURPHY: A moment ago the hon. member said the offer had been turned down, if I heard him correctly. My information, after taking the matter up with the officials of the department, is that in the spring of the