

Agriculture Consultant Studies

ing with economic problems and many other matters.

Mr. Peters: And in raising hell.

Mr. Olson: I do not accept the hon. member's arguments. In fact, I do not think they are related at all. What the hon. member is asking, if you are to accept his argument, is that all documents relating to these consultant studies be made public. With respect to the hon. member's request for the list of such studies tabled in the House during the previous session in response to question No. 1,323, may I say that 19 consultant studies were undertaken between 1963 and the present year and I am prepared to show each and every one of them to the hon. member and, indeed, to any other hon. member of this House.

Mr. Skoberg: What about the press?

Mr. Olson: I am not prepared to put the public to great expense and reproduce all these documents in response to this kind of motion so that there will be copies for the hon. member and all hon. members of the House, and goodness knows how many thousand copies the hon. member might require in order to make the documents a matter of public information.

Mr. Bigg: It is not necessary to print them.

Mr. Olson: The government has a responsibility to do what is reasonable and to do those things that are useful and reasonable, having regard to the expense involved.

Mr. Bigg: I quite agree.

Mr. Olson: I hope the hon. member will withdraw his Notice of Motion. I will undertake that every one of the 19 consultant studies referred to in his motion will be shown to him and to any other hon. members who may wish to see them, at any time they want to see them, if only they will give us reasonable advance notice as to when they want to see them.

There is nothing in these 19 studies that is so confidential as to make us unwilling to show them. We are not trying to hide anything. This motion and many others like it on the Order Paper would require us to produce thousands and thousands of copies of the kind of material requested. To me that would involve an unjustifiable public expense and that is why I cannot accept the motion the way it is worded. It seems to me that it would

[Mr. Olson.]

be better for the hon. member to withdraw his motion.

I will see to it that he obtains these consultative reports or has a chance to look at them and read them. In future, if we have any such reports, if they are not confidential or involve security or like matters he is also welcome to look at those. There is no problem with regard to the 19 studies alluded to. They form 100 per cent of the list the hon. member has asked for. I therefore ask the hon. member to withdraw his motion.

If he chooses not to do that, we can vote on the motion. But even if the motion is defeated I will show the hon. member every one of the 19 consultative studies if he will give us reasonable notice as to when he wishes to look at them or read them.

Mr. Skoberg: Mr. Speaker, will the minister permit a question? Will he agree to make available to the press, under the same conditions, copies of all the consultants' reports? Also, is it not correct that whenever the government has received consultants' reports, only one copy has been made available to the member requesting same? Why is the minister, therefore, talking of thousands of copies that will be needed?

Mr. Olson: The hon. member's remarks seem to reinforce my argument. Is he arguing that the members of the public and all hon. members of the House are entitled to these documents, or is he saying that he is the only member who should see them? I do not understand him. I know that we table two copies of such reports, and these are available for hon. members of the House to see. Usually enough are printed for all hon. members to have a copy. It seems to me that the hon. member is asking for consultant studies that go all the way back to 1963, some six to seven years. We do not produce that many copies of each one, but the hon. member can see a copy of every study.

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I do not suppose the government needs me to defend it.

Mr. Stanfield: Oh, yes, it does.

Mr. Mongrain: The hon. member's kind words are always welcome.

Mr. Bigg: As a responsible member of this House, and as a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I have often wondered when the dumping of alarming amounts of