

Agriculture Consultant Studies

Mr. Skoberg: It then appears, Mr. Speaker, that the minister is not prepared to produce the papers.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, it does not mean that at all. If the hon. member wants to be in committee of the whole, that is a different situation.

Mr. Skoberg: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I thought we could find out whether the minister is aware of the situation as it pertains to this particular report.

Mr. Olson: You will find out as soon as I make my speech.

Mr. Skoberg: Although the minister comes from the west, it seems that he is not concerned. Too often in this House things that should be made public, for the benefit of all concerned, are kept private. All this report asks for is certain documents. If some documents are highly privileged, or could be embarrassing to the government, I could understand. I am very surprised that the minister would not make public, right now what has been asked for in the report and thus put a stop to this discussion.

The report says that in 1963-64 there was competitive tendering on various consultant studies; but as time goes on we find that there was no competitive tendering as far as this report is concerned. It is important to note that the report states as follows:

Please note that the foregoing does not include special studies commissioned by the federal task force on agriculture.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, it is not necessary for me to remind the minister of the serious economic plight of the west. He knows as well as I that the people are quite prepared to accept situations that cannot be remedied immediately. If they get the reports, they can read them themselves; they can digest them and assess the situation as it exists.

In 1964-65 two studies on financial management were competitively tendered, but the study in 1965-66 was not tendered. The hon. member for York East suggested the other day that my knowledge of competitive tendering, and tendering generally, was somewhat limited. But I can assure him that I know that tenders are either private or invitational. I am sure that no one in this House would deny that invitational tenders smack of political patronage, and I believe it is up to us to do something about it. That is one of the reasons why so many notices for the produc-

tion of papers appear in the name of this party, Mr. Speaker. I make no apology for this. I am prepared to accept my responsibility for any notice for the production of papers. The reason is very evident, and I am sure you will find that the people of Canada are prepared to accept the same reasoning.

Mr. Speaker, the book "Listen to the World" spells out the British system. It seems odd that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Mr. Walker) would come here and quote history when we know quite well that the younger generation will not listen to us if we continue this train of thought.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Skoberg: I quote from this book as follows:

Under the British system, which is ours, no political party can erect a prohibitory barrier to prevent the electors from getting information concerning the policy of government. Freedom of discussion is essential to enlighten public opinion in a democratic state; it cannot be curtailed without affecting the right of the people to be informed through sources independent of the government concerning matters of public interest. There must be an untrammelled publication of the news and political opinions of the political parties contending for ascendancy.

Perhaps the minister will now state that he will make available the various reports asked for. I do not think that is too much to ask, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Richardson) recently stated that he plans to hire a firm of consultants to make an examination of the entire government pay system. The same thing would apply here. All I am asking is that these reports be made public and that in practically all cases they be opened up for competitive tendering.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I think some of the remarks made by the hon. member who moved this motion, with respect to alienation of westerners or easterners, and that sort of thing, are completely irrelevant to the motion.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (5:50 p.m.)

Mr. Olson: As a matter of fact, he would have a very difficult time pointing at me and claiming to be more of a westerner than I am. I come from a part of the country that is probably farther west than his, and perhaps I have had as much experience as him, or even a little more, in that part of Canada in deal-