

land in Winnipeg, to the extent it is 50 to 75 per cent higher than market price, would the minister reconsider, if not establishing a public inquiry, at least undertaking a ministerial inquiry into the matter?

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, we are already inquiring into the matter. I do not think we have to have public inquiries every time something is happening. We are having a departmental investigation into the matter and are looking very seriously at the question.

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AIRPORTS

REASON FOR ALLOCATION OF FIFTH COUNTER TO TILDEN FOR AUTOMOBILE RENTALS AT AIRPORTS

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport similar to one I asked him on November 9. In light of the fact that it is the right of the successful bidder to select car rental counter locations within the airport on the basis of the highest bids received, not on the basis of the highest bids accepted, and having regard to the regulation the minister authorized in setting out tenders, which he has called an unfortunate choice of words, namely that "counter space within the terminal building will be leased to car rental concessionaires for the term of their agreement with the location preference in accordance with the offers received, i.e. the highest bidders will have the first choice, the second highest bidder will have the second choice and so on," I should like to ask the minister this. Having clearly read his own words back to him I ask the minister, a former dean of law, why he will not accept his own regulation and allow Tilden, the third highest bidder, to be allocated the third counter instead of the fifth counter at Ministry of Transport airports.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, let me say, first of all, whether the hon. member gets his information from the press or from Mr. Tilden, my expression concerning unfortunate words had nothing to do with the words the hon. member has just quoted.

It seems to me to be perfectly obvious that when you are saying the highest bidder will receive the best space, you clearly mean the highest bid accepted. It is the bids accepted which count. In this particular circumstance, I should remind hon. members that we opened up two places for bids, especially for domestic tenders, after the very strong complaints from Tilden, among others, and as a result of the bidding which was received we now have two Canadian companies in two places among five at our airports as well as a local bidder in a sixth. In arranging space it is our view that we are clearly committed to the placing of those bidders in the order of the bid accepted, and that is what we are doing. To continue to complain about that is completely inappropriate.

Mr. Horner: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister authorized the printing of the tenders. The tenders

Oral Questions

clearly called for and stated "in accordance with the offers received". If the minister can call that an unfortunate choice of words, he still has to defend it.

● (1430)

Some hon. Members: He did.

Mr. Horner: I know that. He has to defend that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It is a fascinating argument but arguments should take place at another time. If the hon. member has another question would he put it.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I just think it is deplorable that a minister of the Crown—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, it was stated by a former minister that Canadian control of privately owned carriers should be the objective. I read that out for the benefit of the minister. My question is, why again did he abandon page two of the regulations in the call for tender which clearly states, "where a tender is successful within more than one counter group only one counter will be awarded and the award will be made on the basis of the highest offer made by the tenderer—"

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

Mr. Bill Clarke (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Urban Affairs if we could give him a moment to get to his chair again.

An hon. Member: He is out campaigning.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Egmont.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC EXPANSION

MINISTER'S ALLEGED STATEMENT CONCERNING ATTITUDES TOWARD QUEBEC—CONFLICT WITH STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. It relates to a statement by the Minister of Regional and Economic Expansion last night on Radio Canada. Is the Prime Minister aware and does he agree, or perhaps has he authorized the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion to state as he did last evening that from now on whenever a decision has to be taken with regard to Quebec he will have to take into account the fact that Quebec's government pursues the goal of separation. If he did authorize or was aware of that statement, would he indicate what implications that has, not only for the Department of Regional Economic Expansion but for the general level of activity on the part of the federal government, given this statement yesterday