

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): With reference to this resolution of the right hon. leader of the opposition there is no objection whatever on the part of the government to this order passing. But I should like to point out that according to the information I have received from the department, 5,842 contracts were awarded during the first nine months of the fiscal year, and the estimate is that it will take a staff of twenty a period of six months to prepare the return that is asked for.

Might I suggest to my right hon. friend that I would be very willing indeed, if he would be good enough to specify any particular contracts, to get the information as soon as possible. I would suggest also to members of the house that in order that information may be made readily available to all members, all these contracts, or as many of them as may be considered necessary, should be referred to the public accounts committee.

Mr. BENNETT: They cannot be referred to the committee on public accounts until the public accounts have been published in the auditor general's report for the next year. The present public accounts are brought up only to the end of March, and that is the reason for the motion now before the house. Perhaps if the contracts exceeding \$5,000 were to be brought down, that would include those in connection with which I desire the information.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): I am informed that for the same period the number of contracts exceeding \$5,000 is 278. I was quite aware of the situation with regard to the public accounts committee, but I thought that might be done by motion with the consent of the house.

TWEED, ONT., POST OFFICE SITE

Mr. GRAYDON:

For a copy of all orders in council, telegrams, letters, correspondence and documents of any kind in the possession of the government, relating to the acquisition of a site for a post office at Tweed, Ontario.

DREDGING FLEET—SALES

Mr. LAPOINTE (Matapedia-Matane—for Mr. Parent, Quebec West and South):

For a copy of all correspondence exchanged between the government and the purchaser, relative to the sale of a portion of the dredging fleet belonging to the government, including barges, dredges, etc., and also copy of contracts entered into by the government and the purchaser.

[Mr. Bennett.]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION CONTRACTS

Mr. CAHAN (for Mr. Lawson) moved:

For a copy of all contracts made since November 1, 1937, to date, by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation or any of its agents on its behalf, with any persons or corporations or the agents of any such persons or corporations for the use of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation stations or chains for broadcasting commercial programs containing advertising originating in the United States, and copies of all papers, letters, telegrams or other documents relating thereto.

Mr. HOWE: The government must decline to produce these papers, for the reason that to do so would be contrary to the public interest. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is an autonomous body, independent of the ministry of the day as to its internal affairs, and in that regard it is on an exact parallel with the Canadian National Railways. Hon. members are aware that the government does not answer questions in the house relating to the internal management of the Canadian National Railways. A committee of the house brings before it the management of the railway with all documents of interest to hon. members, and the management gives such explanations as are required.

The government is willing to set up a similar committee for radio, but it does not believe it to be in the public interest to produce in the house documents relating to the internal management of the broadcasting corporation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Dropped.

Mr. BENNETT: No; far from it. If the Minister of Transport would be good enough to read the statute creating the corporation he will observe that it lives on money provided by the people of Canada, either through licence fees or by direct subventions from the government. Surely we have a right to know what those who receive such money are doing with it, it being the sole purpose of the organization to expend the moneys voted by parliament for the purposes indicated in the statute.

The hon. member under whose name the notice of motion stands is not in his seat, and if the motion were allowed to stand until he is in his place I think it would serve a useful purpose. This is a question of prime importance to the people of Canada. If what is suggested can be done, then the people's money can be spent by an irresponsible body, without parliament having any control. We might as well look the matter squarely in the eye.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Is my right hon. friend aware that the motion is not debatable?