Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): I suggest that this item stand until the minister gets the file.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): I can give my hon. friend all the information he requires at any time.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): What about the contract? Is the government satisfied with the amount and the way in which it was obtained?

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): The contract was obtained in the usual way. We followed the practice which had been followed by my predecessor in office and accepted the lowest tender. Let me assure the committee now and for all time that that is the policy to which we will adhere. We are no respecters of persons; whoever makes the lowest tender is going to get the contract.

Mr. HANSON (Skeena): It is a credit to the present administration that they let the contract to the lowest tenderer.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): We did not let this contract; it was let by the former administration.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): It was to the lowest tenderer?

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): That is as I have said.

Item agreed to.

Alberta — Dominion public buildings — improvements, repairs, etc., $15,000.

Mr. BUCKLEY: Would the minister give us the particulars of this item?

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): This is an item which is carried year after year to cover needed repairs and unforeseen requirements for all the public buildings of the province. It covers such items as the renewal of a roof, repairs to plumbing, painting and general upkeep of the buildings.

Mr. SPEAKMAN: Mr. Chairman, while this item is under discussion I should like to discuss another matter in which a rather important principle is involved. Some little time ago I placed a question on the order paper with regard to the redecoration of the interior of the post office at Red Deer. I was informed that two men had tendered for the work, that the lowest tender had been accepted and the work had been completed. I have no exception to take to the man chosen to do the work, because he is a man of probity, a skilled worker, and his charge was a reasonable one. There is no question about that. My reason for placing the question on the order paper was this: In the little city of Red Deer three or four men carried on that kind of work. One of those men, a man of good standing, came to me and made this complaint. He said that when the tenders were called for, he, together with the two whose names are mentioned in the answer given, offered tenders for consideration and he was informed very definitely that instructions had been issued that no tenders could be accepted for consideration—the minister will appreciate the difference between, "accepted for consideration" and "accepted"—save from two whose names are given in the reply which I received. So this man went back with his tender in his pocket. According to him, his tender was refused all consideration because his name was not on the favoured list, and as supporting the right party. The minister will see, in the first place, that I am not making this statement as something of which I have personal knowledge I do not know first-hand that this man was refused consideration. I am simply passing on to the minister the complaint that was made to me in a very serious, not to say energetic, manner by a man whose probity there was no reason to doubt, a business man of good standing. If he was right in his complaint as to the treatment he received, he complained with very good reason. If that did happen, it is a very serious thing. It is not a matter of small political patronage which we know occasionally happens in the best of families and in the best of parties. But it is a serious matter from the public point of view if a tender which may be the lowest, and may be a satisfactory tender in every other respect, is not considered because of the political views of the would-be tenderer. I cannot expect the minister to know anything about it just now; indeed, I doubt if he ever knew anything about it; but I would ask him to look into the matter very closely and ascertain whether the answer given on April 22 to the question I placed on the order paper is the full and complete answer, and to assure himself that neither from anywhere in his department nor from anywhere connected with his department have such instructions or suggestions gone forth; because, as he will readily appreciate, such a matter strikes at the root of the decency and honesty of all public service. In bringing the matter to his attention I am not making any charge. I have watched the minister in the house, and I believe that he is efficient and fair and doing his best to carry on his work. I bring the matter to his