

Supply—Labour

contracts, as I have since found out. In order to find out, however, I had to go through the routine of putting a question on the order paper and in due course, today as a matter of fact, sessional paper No. 168 was tabled. The Secretary of State had to write to every department of government asking if they knew anything about these questions I had asked; and from this file of correspondence it turns out that the contracts concerned had been let by the Canadian Commercial Corporation.

If I am not mistaken that corporation comes under the Minister of Trade and Commerce. I am going to send this sessional paper across to the minister in order to save time. I asked about the contracts in question for the years 1947, 1948 and 1949, and the information makes it quite clear that in November of 1948 the last small contract was let to the union shop concerned—the one which had given good service during the war, and that beginning in November, 1948, substantial contracts began to be let to the non-union shop in question, which since that time have amounted to a total of \$472,866.89.

I do not know what the minister's answer will be. He may tell me that I should not ask him to interfere in what is done by his friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce, but I remind him that he is the Minister of Labour; he is the man who should see to it that the fair wage principles that have been established are lived up to. As a trade unionist surely he should be interested in seeing to it that work of this kind is left with a union shop, as was the case previously. This was not an instance in which the Winnipeg and district trades and labour council asked that contracts be transferred from one shop to another. They were simply asking that the contracts be left where they had been all through the war years. I would appreciate it if the minister would deal with these matters now, for it does seem to me that he has some responsibility in connection with them.

Mr. Mitchell: My responsibility extends this far. The Canadian Commercial Corporation is the agent which lets contracts for the Department of National Defence; and if my hon. friend will look up the contract in question he will find that it contains a fair-wage clause. I assume this other firm had the lowest tender. Let us be clear about that; there must have been a fair-wage clause in the contract. I do not know what the fair wage would be there, but when requested by other departments my department does set up fair-wage conditions in the area.

That is the answer to the first point. The second point had to do with holidays with

[Mr. Knowles.]

pay in the building trades, if I remember rightly. When the federal government lets a contract the provincial legislation prevails. If the men are employees of the federal government—that is, if they are labourers—they come under the regulations of the federal department and of course are not under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, any more than the employees of a provincial government are under the jurisdiction of this department.

Mr. Knowles: There is a great deal of sweetness and light around here today, but I confess I do not feel that way. The correspondence I have read to the committee indicates that the minister did not know anything about this contract and was not even prepared to find out for me which department had let it. I was put to the trouble of having to place a question on the order paper, and the Secretary of State was put to the trouble of having to go through the routine of preparing the sessional paper that was tabled today. Now the minister rises in his place and says he knows there is a fair wage clause in that contract which was let by the Canadian Commercial Corporation. I remind him that the complaint made to him by the Winnipeg and district trades and labour council, which I supported, had to do with the fact that the shop which formerly had the contract was a union shop, paying not just the fair wages that are required by the provincial legislation as a sort of minimum but paying the trade union wage. From that shop the contract was taken away and given to a shop that may pay the fair wages required by Manitoba legislation, but wages which are less than the trade union wages in this industry. Frankly the minister's answer is not satisfactory.

Mr. Mitchell: It may not be satisfactory to you, but I am not going to take that from you or anybody else. I believe the fair wage policy of the federal government has put millions of dollars into the pockets of the working people of this country. There was a fair-wage clause in the contract, and those fair wages are worked out by my department. I have an office in Winnipeg. If when my hon. friend wrote to me he had been clearer, he would have obtained the information he sought. May I say to him: We are dealing with thousands of these cases. All you need to do is call up my secretary, myself, or the deputy and give the industrial relations department the information you desire to have. You do not need to get a stenographer from the pool or your secretary to do it for you. There are no sharp practices in it, let us clearly understand that, if that is the impression my hon. friend is trying to create.