

*Supply—Indian Affairs*

year certain flour was bought by the department for the use of destitute Indians, and a contract was entered into. But in the case to which the hon. member refers, it is not departmental buying. In other words, a portion of the interest fund which is sent to the agent for distribution among the Indians apparently is being used to purchase flour for them. This flour is not being purchased with departmental funds. From the telegram the hon. gentleman sent me, the agent apparently has asked for tenders from different milling companies. I have no knowledge as to whether an order has yet been placed with the firm to which he refers, or with any other firm.

Mr. VALLANCE: The minister surely will not claim that his department is not responsible for what the agent does? The agent is an official of his department, and whether he is spending Indian money or departmental money, he is still acting as an officer of the department.

Mr. MURPHY: Quite so. Nor am I using the words which the hon. member is putting in my mouth.

Mr. VALLANCE: The minister said it was not a departmental matter.

Mr. MURPHY: I said the flour was not being purchased with departmental funds, and therefore it was not departmental buying.

Mr. VALLANCE: But the minister controls the funds of the Indians.

Mr. MURPHY: Possibly I can make it clearer in this way. A certain amount of money is held in the consolidated revenue fund which belongs to that particular band of Indians, and interest at five per cent is allowed upon it. That money is transmitted to the agent for distribution among the Indians.

Mr. VALLANCE: At whose request?

Mr. MURPHY: It is not a matter of request, it is a matter of right.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: Every year?

Mr. MURPHY: Certainly. Or they might ask that it be left here to accumulate; but apparently the money has been sent to him for distribution. It may be that the Indians themselves requested the agent to purchase the flour for them out of this fund rather than have it all distributed to them in cash. Apparently—and I use the word because the department issued no instructions to the agent with regard to it—he asked for quota-

[Mr. Murphy.]

tions from different firms to supply this flour. Whether he has placed an order with any firm, as I have told the hon. member, I have no information to give him.

Mr. GERSHAW: How is the grain or wheat from these Indian reserves sold? Some of the larger milling companies have stated that they are sometimes in a position to give a better price than the department obtain, and yet they are never given an opportunity of bidding.

Mr. MURPHY: The Indian agent, as the hon. member knows, does practically all the business for the Indians under his charge. One of his duties is to see that the Indians' grain is sold to the best advantage, and I presume he sells it to the elevator companies at the best price obtainable.

Mr. GERSHAW: It sometimes happens that the milling companies are able to give a better price for the wheat than are the regular grain dealers, but the larger companies have stated that they never get an opportunity to buy.

Mr. MURPHY: That business is not transacted departmentally, and I am informed that the agent does not report to the department as to whom he sells the wheat or what price he obtains for it, although, as I stated a few moments ago, his duty is to see that the wheat is sold to the best advantage in order that the individual Indian may receive the most for his crop.

Mr. DUFF: Is the minister able to give the name of the medical officer who looks after the needs of the Indians of the Chapel Island reserve in the county of Richmond, Nova Scotia?

Mr. MURPHY: I will endeavour to give the hon. member an answer in a moment. I observe that the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Gardiner) is now in his seat. On May 2 he asked that certain information be brought before the committee in regard to the purchase of coal for certain agencies in Alberta. I am now in a position to inform the committee that in 1930-31, agent Gooderham secured quotations for the fuel requirements of Namaka, Gleichen and Cluny from William McConnell, of Gleichen, and the Midland Coal Company of Drumheller. In that year coal was purchased from Mr. McConnell, who submitted the lowest tender, at the following prices: \$7.50 per ton, f.o.b. agency; \$8.50 per ton, f.o.b. farm No. 3; \$9.50 per ton, f.o.b. farm B. In 1930-31, coal was purchased again from William McConnell, he having submitted