

the people were given to understand that the government would not grant any more closed leases. But cases have come out in which the government have granted leases to their friends. In the constituency of the hon. member for Alberta (Mr. Herron) there is a large tract of land, which, two years ago, was handed over, as I understand, to political friends of hon. gentlemen opposite, under lease for twenty-one years at a merely nominal rental. Is it the intention of the government to consider every application that comes in? Are they going to grant these closed leases, and so retard settlement in that country? If these leases are to be granted, upon what terms will they be granted—what length of time? What provision is to be made with regard to the termination of the leases? These are fair questions, questions in which the people of that country are greatly interested. The information on this subject is necessary in order to place all the people on the same footing and avoid the discrimination which has been shown in favour of men in the east against men who went into that country in days gone by, when hon. gentlemen opposite had no faith in that country.

Mr. OLIVER. I am not able to make a statement at this moment as to the policy of the government with regard to leases. I hope to make that statement soon. My hon. friend (Mr. M. S. McCarthy) will have to bear with me until I have had an opportunity to reach a decision as to what shall be done. I can only assure him of this—that there will be no advantage given to outsiders as against insiders—if I may be allowed those expressions. No advantage will be given to outside speculators as against local cattlemen—the hon. gentleman may depend on that.

Mr. M. S. MCCARTHY. I have no desire to hurry the hon. gentleman (Mr. Oliver) in his decision. We realize that it is a very important matter and one that calls for grave consideration. Will the hon. minister say if any closed leases have been granted since he took charge of the Department of the Interior?

Mr. OLIVER. I am afraid I shall be obliged to ask the hon. gentleman to wait for a time. It will be possible for him to get a return of the leases that have been granted. I have not in mind everything that has been done by the department since I took hold of it, so I am not able to answer the hon. gentleman's question. Of course, it will be available to the hon. member—all the business of the department is available for the consideration of the House at any time.

Mr. M. S. MCCARTHY. Surely the hon. gentleman (Mr. Oliver) knows whether any closed leases have been granted since he became Minister of the Interior. I am not asking with regard to a lot of 160 acres, or

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a township, or a section. Surely he can remember if any closed leases have been granted. All I ask is that all men in that country be treated equally; and if it is the policy of the government to grant these closed leases, he should let the people of that country know. Complaints have reached me from men who have large holdings in that country, who have been depending on neighbouring property as a range, and who find that closed leases have been granted to men who live hundreds and hundreds of miles away from the locality covered by those leases. All I want to know is whether any such leases have been granted, and surely the minister can remember.

Mr. OLIVER. I have been anxious to do what is right by that country since I took hold of the department. I found that regulations were in force permitting the granting of leases. While I did not feel that in continuing the granting of such leases the best would be done that could be done for the country, it seemed to me it would not be possible for me arbitrarily to break off arrangements that may have been entered in to by the department before I took office, merely because it happened that the bargain required my signature. But I can tell my hon. friend that no leases have been granted concerning which the initiatory steps—

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. No such leases have been originated?

Mr. OLIVER. No such leases have been originated since I took office. While I am ready to be held responsible for these things departmentally, I am not able to give the hon. member, off-hand, the information he asks for.

Mr. M. S. MCCARTHY. Would the minister be kind enough to bring down a return showing what lands are under lease in the province of Alberta at the present time?

Mr. OLIVER. I may say that, in answer to a request of the hon. member for East Grey (Mr. Sproule), such a return has been prepared and I think it will be placed on the table of the House in a day or two.

Mr. FOWLER. What is the policy of the department with regard to the granting of closed leases? When an application comes in, is an examination made of the land to ascertain whether it is fit for agricultural purposes; or is a lease granted because application has been made?

Mr. OLIVER. There is an official, known as the inspector of ranches. When an application is made for a lease, he is instructed to inspect the territory applied for. And if he does not report that the land is suitable only for grazing, I understand that no lease is granted.