

Q. And from that you drew an inference?—

A. I must say, however, if I remember aright, in all justice to Mr. Lanctot, that he did not think those men were to be put on the list.

Q. And from that you drew the inference that everything was all right. As minister, you were prepared to impart the information to Mr. Blondin or to anybody else that everything was all right?—

And here again the minister was guarded.

—A. Without passing judgment on the irregularity of the proceeding, I would have been ready to give any member of parliament all the information I had because I thought it was for the benefit of all concerned.

I think that is all that bears on the statement that Mr. Blondin could have got the information if he had asked for it.

So, the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Blondin), has been censured by this majority report in this respect, because he did not go to the minister by whom he would have been told that Mr. Lanctot had paid for the work on the 22nd of November, and had returned the goods some time after. Now, if it were not that sufficient weight, is attached to the fact to build on it this condemnation of the hon. member for Champlain, I would not refer to it, but it is a significant fact—which might have influenced the judgment of the hon. member for Champlain as much as the statement of the minister, which no doubt was perfectly true according to the information he had received—that what the hon. member for Champlain would have learned is that the sending of this cheque with great promptitude on the 22nd of November, the bill being made on the 21st, was singularly coincident with the fact that the minister, on the 22nd of November had sent instructions to Sorel to institute further investigation into the Marine and Fisheries Department. Now, was that a circumstance that would have added, in the mind of the hon. member for Champlain, any very great weight as bearing upon the manner in which these goods were obtained, to the fact that payment had been paid on that very specific date? All these circumstances would still have remained, that all this thing had been carried on in secret without the knowledge of Mr. Papineau, that there did not exist in any book of the government at any period one single charge to show that Mr. Lanctot had ever got anything from the department, that from the beginning to end this thing had been kept concealed until this date, the 22nd of November, coincident with the day on which the Minister of Marine sent instructions to Sorel for further investigation.

I am speaking now only from the point of view of the question whether the hon. member for Champlain had reasonable

cause for going ahead. He might well have thought that there was not much weight to be attached to the fact that payment was made just when the investigation was being started, for work and goods the disposal whereof had been withheld from everybody representing the department up to the 22nd of November. Might he not well have thought, that does not mean much, this payment made just when is coming the time when the people will find out what has been done. You have to look at the position of the member for Champlain, and the reasons he had for forming his opinion on that matter. What would he have had reason to believe had he gone to the minister and got that information? He would simply have got the information that after the thing was all done, when the cat was just coming out of the bag, a payment had been made.

It does seem to me an extraordinary thing that a committee whose standard was so low that it could see no harm in what the member for Richelieu had admittedly done, should suddenly take so lofty a position when it came to be a question of the degree of prudence which the member for Champlain should have exercised in making these charges. If it were not for the eloquent protests of the Minister of Justice, one would have been tempted to think—of course my thinking so might have been attributed to partisanship—but one would have been tempted to think that there had been perhaps a slight grain of partisanship in the balance that he was holding as between these two gentlemen. I must apologize to the House for detaining it so long on this case. I have spoken to this length because I thought it was my duty to do what I could to clearly convey my view of what is the proper conclusion to be reached on this matter, and thus to show at least that I realize how deeply the public interest is involved in parliament coming to a right decision on this important question.

Mr. V. GEOFFRION (Verchères). The hon. gentleman (Mr. Doherty) who has just taken his seat was very impressive in his opening remarks. I would be glad if I were able to congratulate him on a change in the length of his addresses; because when he was judge in Montreal his judgments were as long, and interminable, and as wearisome to the advocates practising before him, as his speeches are in this House. Sir, the reasons given by the hon. member for Welland (Mr. German) why the majority report should be adopted, have been commented upon at great length. The Minister of Justice has treated exhaustively the legal question, and I will make a very few remarks on a point that does not appear to have been touched by hon. members. The only question for me is