

Mr. MEIGHEN: I am afraid my hon. friend is pushing the tender system overboard. Item agreed to.

St. Peters Bay—Breakwater and beach protection, repairs and reconstruction, \$4,800.

Mr. MEIGHEN: This is new work too; what is the estimated cost? Was there anything in last year's estimates? What is the reason for the work this year? Economy?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): This is to reconstruct the middle section of the breakwater for a length of 104 feet from 20 to 24 feet wide, and strengthen the seaward side 111 feet long with piling. Also to reconstruct cribwork protection 230 feet in length and 7 feet in width adjoining inner end of breakwater. This is recommended by the district engineer.

Mr. STEVENS: This is another item of \$4,800. It is a case of day labour again, I suppose?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): Yes.

Mr. STEVENS: I so protest because this is evidence to me of a departure.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): It is not a departure.

Mr. STEVENS: I am not objecting so much to the item, I do not know whether it is necessary or not, but I am objecting to this departure from principle. This parliament took years to establish the principle of calling for tenders in the case of work of this kind, and there has always been criticism when that principle has been departed from—there was criticism of the previous government on occasions. But matters came to a point when the policy of calling for tenders was generally adopted, and now we are reversing it. I will admit there is not an entire abandonment of the principle of calling for tenders, but there is every evidence that we are reversing that very sound policy and we find ourselves faced with the fact that when there is to be a large expenditure, comparatively speaking, it will be done without calling for tenders. I do not agree at all with the hon. member who made quite a lengthy explanation on the previous item. It does not matter whether it is local men or contractors who are doing the work. I am quite aware that you could not get a big contracting firm from the city of Halifax, or from Quebec or Montreal to go out and tender for these jobs—I am not so innocent of business matters as to suppose that for a moment. But you have, for instance, brush wood. Now, I happen to be very familiar with work of that character; I have seen any amount of it done. It is a

sort of work that lends itself very suitably to contracts. That is to say you may have a score of settlers in the neighbourhood of where the work is to be done, or within a measurable distance of it, who know enough to cut brush, make brush mattresses, and haul them to the desired point. It is the simplest kind of job, labour work of the most ordinary character, and there is no reason in the world why such work should not be done by tender. Furthermore, take the question of piling that my hon. friend mentioned a moment ago, or the question of depositing rocks. A great many of these breakwaters consist simply of piling, but some brush is required where there is a current or a tide and it is filled in with rock usually. Brush must be sunk by rock piles invariably—that is the practice followed. All that class of work lends itself peculiarly to the tender system. It does not matter if the work only costs a thousand dollars, it should be done in that way. If the minister is following the advice of his colleague from Prince Edward Island (Mr. Sinclair) what does it mean? In referring to these expenditures I am not limiting myself to Prince Edward Island; or any particular section at all. We have a page of small items of that kind here. The people living in the neighbourhood where these works are contemplated will be very quickly advised of the expenditures and the intentions of the government by local members, to say nothing of the press—and they will say "Here is a chance for us to get some government work." Now, it is no reflection on my part on the citizens of any of these districts to say that they are not going to apply themselves to this work with the energy that they would display if there was a contract for which they had to bid. Take the matter of brush mattresses. Suppose the minister's officials go down to St. Peter's Bay and invite the farmers, and others in the neighbourhood, to cut brush, make mattresses, and haul them down with their own teams to the beach to be put into place. Does the minister imagine for a moment that he is going to get the work done as cheaply as if his officers said "We have so many brush mattresses to make of such dimensions and such a character, and we want bids for making them?" I want to bring as strongly as I can to the attention of the committee this tendency to depart from the well recognized principle of doing public work by tender. That principle holds good not only now but in the future so far as I am concerned. I have often expressed the same opinion in the past, not only here but in other places. I have always stood for that principle and I