

will be brought down in a few days, giving a list of the government dredges and their operations for the past three or four years. When we come to the dredging vote, I shall be glad to give to my hon. friend a statement of where the government dredges are at the present time; I have not the information available at the moment. In my opinion, there is a great deal in the suggestion that the government fleet of dredges should be increased. Of course, we cannot always judge of the proper cost of dredging in one place from what it is in another. The prices vary greatly by reason of difference in the locality or in the quality of the soil, the quantity to be removed, the depth of the water, the liability to storms, and other considerations; but, speaking generally, I am inclined to think that the government is able to get dredging done by its own dredges at a lower rate than by contract. On the Pacific coast, where we have four dredges at work, we are doing all the dredging with our own dredges. In the eastern provinces we have recently somewhat increased the government dredging fleet, and I anticipate that we shall continue to increase it with reasonable rapidity.

Mr. DANIEL. Are all the government dredges employed at present?

Mr. PUGSLEY. Yes, during the past season every government dredge has been kept vigorously at work.

Mr. LALOR. Can the minister give us the cost per yard of dredging by the government dredges?

Mr. PUGSLEY. As I have just stated, the cost varies so much that it is only possible to give the cost in each case. It may be ten cents in one case, fifty cents in another, a dollar in another. In order to get the information for myself so as to have it for the committee, I asked the deputy minister to have a statement made, as near as might be, of the cost of dredging with the government dredge at Gaspereau during the season just passed; and I find, taking the cost of operation, and making a fair allowance for interest, maintenance and sinking fund, that it cost about one dollar per cubic yard. There are other places where the government dredges do the work at fifteen cents, twenty cents or twenty-five cents. When the return comes down, my hon. friend will be able to see the cost of dredging by government dredges at the various places where they have been employed.

Mr. BARKER. I would like to call the minister's attention to that Gaspereau work, because it gives at a very recent date the estimated cost of the work done by the government itself and the cost of the work

done by contractors. In 1907 an estimate was obtained by the department for certain dredging work at Gaspereau, and the minister's own engineer on the spot estimated it at from fifteen cents to twenty cents per yard. In the following season the minister let that work by contract at ninety cents per yard.

Mr. PUGSLEY. After public tender.

Mr. BARKER. When the chief engineer of the department was examined on the subject, he said that twenty cents was the estimate made by the departmental engineer of what the work would actually cost the government, and in the face of that the government let the contract to the Maritime Dredging Company of St. John at ninety cents a yard.

Mr. PUGSLEY. I am very glad my hon. friend has mentioned this matter, because it will afford me pleasure to give to the committee all the information I can in regard to the Gaspereau dredging. The estimate of the probable cost was made originally by Mr. Day in 1903; Mr. Day was an engineer of the department. Mr. Stead evidently followed his estimate and the chief engineer with no knowledge of the locality, never having visited the spot, accepted the estimate of Mr. Day who evidently was of the opinion that it could be done by the government dredge at that price. As to letting the contract—there has been very strong pressure for a good many years by the people of Port Elgin and by the people of Gaspereau that the work should be done. When I became minister, the member for Westmorland urged me very strongly to have the work done with the least possible delay. I knew from inquiry that there were no government dredges in the vicinity and that it probably would be difficult to get a contractors' dredge. I was aware that the maritime dredging company was bringing a dredge down from the St. Lawrence, in the vicinity of Chicoutimi, to the maritime provinces, and on the route down it would pass Port Elgin and could go through the straits of Canso around the Nova Scotia coast to the Bay of Fundy. I asked the manager of the Maritime Dredging Company if he would be willing to have his dredge stop on the way down as the work was urgent, and, pending the calling for tenders to go to work, and agree to accept for the work which would be done pending the reception of tenders and only that, the price of the lowest accepted tender. He agreed to that and when the dredge reached Port Elgin it stopped there and the engineer was notified it was ready to go to work. Tenders were called in the ordinary way and there was only one tender, that of the Maritime Dredging Company at 90 cents per cubic yard. The chief engineer, having that