

one, and I thought it called for a general answer. I thought the answer I gave him would indicate to one familiar with the work, as he is, the points I wished to refer to. But if he wishes the details, I may say that on the Kaministiquia river we have been paying fifteen cents a yard. The owners of dredges there decline to work any more at that figure. At Point Edward, Sarnia, where the great transportation companies of the country are urging us to carry on dredging so that the vessels may approach the wharfs, and not be obliged to do business through American ports, we have to pay from \$1 to \$3 an hour more. We have no option, for there are no dredges offering. We have advertised and communicated with different parties and are doing our best to make an arrangement at the lowest possible price. I think it was in answer to the hon. member for Welland (Mr. German) that I said we might have to pay higher prices. We have to take into consideration the question of departing from the policy of maintaining our own dredges. It is a serious question, and the mere statement on the part of anybody that it costs more will not be sufficient. It will have to be decided by a careful calculation based upon the actual figures.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. If the hon. minister has the information at hand, I would very much like to know how much dredging he will do at Point Edward?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. The appropriation for the current year is \$10,000. But I do not think it will complete the work. The main estimates now under consideration, contain amounts that, with few exceptions, are for works that have been undertaken and are in progress. When we are discussing new works, I shall be able to give further information. The chief engineer advises me, that, with the amount of money we have we shall make a fairly good approach to the wharf, so that the trade will not be stopped at that port.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. It is a very important work.

Mr. CLARKE. How much does the hon. minister expect to have to pay for dredging at Fort William?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. The material to be removed there varies very much. We have rock, hard-pan, boulders mixed with sand—a great variety of material. As has been explained, it makes a great difference whether a dredge has work to do that allows it to stay in one place and go deep, or whether it can skim along and take off only a few feet. Also, the distance to which the material has to be removed is a factor in the calculation. We have been asked as high as twenty-five cents a yard in that section.

Hon. Mr. SUTHERLAND.

Mr. CLARKE. Is the hon. minister going to pay twenty-five cents a yard?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Not if we can help it. That is a serious question that has to be considered. The government is like a merchant or anybody else, it must simply make the best arrangement it can. We are negotiating now, trying to get the best prices possible. If we cannot get the work done at the price we want to pay, then it becomes a question of paying the price demanded of us or stopping the work.

Mr. CLARKE. I hope the hon. minister will be able to give us further information with regard to the work at Port Arthur. I was there last fall, and I know that the people are very anxious to have the work gone on with. I believe it is a work of very great importance, for Port Arthur and Fort William are ports that are increasing in importance every day. We are indebted to the minister for the information he has given us, and apparently given us under great difficulties in view of the fact—as it appears to be from what has been said by the hon. ex-minister (Hon. Mr. Tarte) that this important department is to be disorganized. We are also indebted to the hon. ex-minister for the valuable information he has given us. I agree with that hon. gentleman that the policy of the department ought to be to construct first-class modern dredges, and carry on the work as a government work. The hon. minister says that the cost of operating one of these dredges, with a capacity of six or seven hundred yards, including tugs and scows, is about \$35 a day. If the hon. gentleman's statements are correct, and contractors are not satisfied with \$8 an hour or \$80 a day, I think he should take a larger appropriation for the purpose of constructing government dredges, for it is evident that it will pay to have new dredges. It is better to spend money in building modern dredges than to pay \$8 or \$10 an hour for dredges of no greater capacity than 600 yards a day. But would not the ex-minister be a little more explicit? He has warned the committee that there is some scheme on foot to dismantle or disorganize the department. If the department is well equipped—and I understand that it is—it would be a national misfortune to have it destroyed. If it is the policy of the government to give up this national workshop at Sorel, and give over the work to contractors, we should be informed of it. It is of great importance to us that we should know what the hon. gentleman means by the warning he has given us. Would not the minister (Hon. Mr. Sutherland) frankly give us the information?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. What information does the hon. gentleman (Mr. Clarke) refer to?