

those of Commissioner Prince upon this particular matter.

To provide for the expenses and salaries of commissioners appointed to investigate charges against Government officials, including witness fees..... \$2,000

Mr. SPROULE. I want to ask a question of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries. Has that any connection with the trouble between the Noble Brothers, of Collingwood and Killarney and the department, or is there any information as to how that case stands?

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES. Judge Johnson was appointed some years ago to investigate that matter. He made an investigation in reference to the complaint in the time of my predecessor in the department. He reopened the case, and when I came into the department I found it hanging. The case had been reopened at the instance of the Nobles, and then they would not go on. There has been a great deal of correspondence between the lawyers of the Nobles and myself. They wanted to put the department in the position of defendants, requesting that the department should admit certain things and then go on and excuse themselves for seizing the Nobles' nets. We do not admit that we should take that position. We claim that the department was right in the course it pursued, and if they desire to give any explanation we say we will reopen the case and hear their witnesses. In the middle of this correspondence the decision came from the Supreme Court of Canada raising the whole question as to whether we ever had any jurisdiction in these waters at all. The Noble Brothers would then say to us: Well, we don't care now whether you are going on or not; if that decision holds we will sue you in law for damages for your illegal seizures, and if it does not hold we will be in no worse position than we are at present. I ordered the investigation at once to be closed, and there is \$100 due to Judge Johnston. I have sent the account to the Department of Justice for taxation, but it is not embraced in the \$200, and will be paid out of the general vote.

Public Buildings, Ottawa—Fire protection, electric lighting, &c..... \$75,000

Mr. FOSTER. I wish to ask the Minister of Public Works if it is not true that the Government has a contract at the present time with the Ottawa Gas Lighting Company, which has still some three years to run, and which is current of course at the present time; whether that contract was not entered into after certain conditions agreed to on both sides, one of which was that the price of gas should be very largely reduced, and that the company should be compelled to supply a maximum quantity. In order to fulfil these conditions and to supply the quantity of gas that

was required, it is represented to me that the company went to some \$50,000 of extra expense to put themselves in a position to compass that cheapness and that supply. I am also informed that the price of gas not only has been reduced from \$4 to \$1.50, which is a very great reduction, but with the improvement in new burners you get a 40-candle light, and consume only about half the gas compared with former consumption. If these things be true, it modifies to a large extent the proposition which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Tarte) put before the House; and I myself had forgotten the circumstances at the time, and did not allude to it when the item was being discussed. If you are going to take the alternative of being in a position like that—and we must carry out contracts as fairly as we possibly can—you have got to go to the expense of wiring a large portion of the buildings, and you have to go to the expense of having a technical and efficient staff in order to carry this out, neither of which expenditures are needed if you light by gas; because of course the company looks after that. I bring this matter up because it is additional information which probably the House did not possess at the time, and I think it would modify the action of the Minister of Public Works. I do not make it a plea that because you are using gas now, therefore you should not make the change. But I do make this plea: that when the Government revises a former decision, and by conditions made on both sides, large expenditures are entered into, and a contract based upon them, it becomes a matter of great moment whether or not the Government is justified in destroying the investment to that extent, of the company with which it made the contract. Certainly the very best reasons should be given before that is done, and even then, it would be a question whether or not a consideration should be given to the contractor who entered into the contract in good faith. If my hon. friend (Mr. Tarte) will view the circumstances in that light, and if he were to make a proposal to that company in certain directions he may find that he can make a much more advantageous arrangement in connection with the conditions as they exist, than by undertaking this very large expenditure of \$75,000 for installing an electric light plant. I am sorry that the information was not at hand and the question discussed when the Minister had his estimate before the committee; but that does not render the information any the less pertinent. I want to ask my hon. friend to take that into his consideration; and I am sure he will see the force of it. If I might express an opinion, it would be that, under all the circumstances, it would be well to go a little slowly in the interim between now and January; and the hon. gentleman can obtain full information, and have his plans