

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. As I have explained, this vote was taken for the general repairs to these dredges, scows and barges for 1903-4.

Mr. CLARKE. The hon. gentleman says that all the dredges except one were in fair working order. What is the name of that one?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. The 'Challenge.'

Mr. CLANCY. There seems to be a peculiar uniformity in the sums required for the repairs of the dredges. The sum is estimated at \$2,500 in each case. Has it been found that the expenditure is of this uniform amount in each case, or has the hon. minister simply taken the whole sum and made a rough average?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. My hon. friend could not have listened very carefully to the estimates I gave. They ran from \$750 to \$3,954. It is perfectly true that in the case of dredges of the same capacity, having the same tugs and barges, it has been found that \$2,500 is the average amount required to put them in repairs and keep them in order. That is the report of the engineer of the department.

Mr. BARKER. I presume, as this money is required for incidental repairs, that the work shall be done by day labour?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. If a new boiler is required, we call for tenders. In the case of a breakdown, we get the parts of machinery required from the different manufacturers. Where it is the question of some repairs—iron work or carpentering—that is done by day labour. In a city or town, where there is a shop, we go to the shop.

Mr. GERMAN. In my opinion the government should consider carefully whether or not any more money should be voted for the construction or repairing of government dredges. In my opinion the government would do well to dispose of every dredge it has, and instead of endeavouring to do the dredging of harbours by government work, it would be more advantageous to have that work done by contract. Tenderers would then have the desire to procure and maintain sufficient plant in Canada to do the work called for. At present we have not many contractors with sufficient dredging plant to do the work which is frequently offered, and we find that the government will employ American dredges to do work which our Canadian contractors should be allowed to do. My information is that in the United States all the harbour work is done by contract. It is well known that the contractors will do more work and better work in the same length of time than can be done by government dredges. I know something of the government dredges at the

Mr. BARKER.

present time, and I know that the government scarcely have one dredge that will do half the work in one day that can be done and will be done by a contractor, and better done too. The government dredges do not work the same number of hours as the others, nor do they work at the same rate of speed. The government have a lot of old dredges on which they are spending money year after year to maintain, but which it would be better to tie up at a dock and leave, and do the work with up-to-date dredges under men who understand their business. This would be very much better and cheaper than to continue the dredging situation that now exists.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. So far as Ontario is concerned, my hon. friend (Mr. German) is about right. The government has only old dredges there. The case was absolutely the same in the St. Lawrence when this government took office. But the hon. gentleman is mistaken when he says that the government dredges that have been built during the last four or five years are not equal to those owned by the contractors. He is altogether mistaken.

Mr. GERMAN. Oh, oh.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. Well, two and two make four, not five. I am able to say there is not one contractor in this Dominion who has a dredge equal to those that are working on the St. Lawrence to-day. That is a clear statement and it cannot be disputed. The dredges that have been built at Sorel and the one built by the Polson Iron Works are about the best dredges on this continent. And I say, more than that, that the new hydraulic dredge that has been built by the Polson Iron Works and which is working on the St. Lawrence to-day has a greater capacity than that of any other dredge in Canada. It has a capacity of about a million yards a month; and there is no other dredge in this country—there are very few on this continent—that can do the same amount of work. The hon. gentleman (Mr. German) says that he has had experience so far as government dredges are concerned. Well, I have had some experience too. I know that the dredging on the St. Lawrence, is carried out for three or four cents a yard—not more than five cents a yard—and that the contractors elsewhere are charging as high as fifty cents a yard.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. It is not my fault. Yes, there are contractors who are charging more than that to-day.

Mr. CLARKE. Where?

Hon. Mr. TARTE. The Public Accounts Committee may investigate. It is not my business. I speak of the Department of Public Works, with which I was connected,