

Mr. PATTERSON (Brant). Manila fibre is subject to great fluctuations in price, and there will, of course, be danger that it may be purchased at the wrong time. Who is to be the judge? Is there to be one supreme authority, or is there to be departmental action?

Mr. OUMET. I think it will be departmental action, with the advice of experts and of the foreman of the factory itself.

Mr. PATERSON (Brant). The salary paid to the foreman will be sufficient to secure the services of a man to whom may be entrusted the power to buy this fibre. If we are going to have expert advice outside of the foreman it will be the means of increasing the cost of binder twine, and the expenses will become so large that the Government establishment will not be able to compete with ordinary manufacturing industries. The Government is taking this action with a view to employ prison labour, and at the same time keep the manufacturers of binding twine at Halifax from obtaining too high a price for their product.

Mr. OUMET. This salary of \$1,500 is the same salary as the foreman is paid in the Central Prison, Toronto.

Mr. PATERSON (Brant). On whose judgment and advice has the present expenditure been made?

Mr. OUMET. On the advice of the department.

Mr. PATERSON (Brant). With respect to machinery, where is it to be bought, and what will be the character of the buildings in which it will be placed? Certainly the Minister of Justice is not himself in communication with manufacturers of machinery, and therefore we wish to know who is in charge of the work.

Mr. OUMET. The Inspector of Penitentiaries is responsible for the work indicated by the hon. gentleman. I understand he has visited the Central Prison, Toronto, and obtained at that establishment all the information possible. Probably he has also consulted other people who are experts in that line of manufacture.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. How many convicts are likely to be employed in this work?

Mr. OUMET. I cannot tell.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. Well, that is a matter of very considerable moment to know. Possibly the only justification for this would be that it will give employment to a large number of convicts, and if only a small number are employed, then the experiment is one of a very dubious character.

Mr. OUMET. Three hundred tons of material are to be bought, and I suppose

the foreman will see to the employment of as many convicts as are wanted.

Sir RICHARD CARTWRIGHT. That is no information at all. There are about 600 men in the Kingston penitentiary, and from one cause or another, it has been extremely difficult to employ them. The question for the Department of Justice is, how to provide employment for a large number of these convicts. If this binder twine business is going to give employment to a large number, there is a good deal to be said for it, but if it is only going to give employment to a small number, then I extremely doubt the propriety of passing this vote. My hon. friend the Solicitor-General is the locum tenens and he ought to have made himself familiar with the details, he ought to know all about penitentiaries.

Mr. CURRAN. I saved a great many people from going to the penitentiary in my time.

Mr. CASEY. My hon. friend (Sir Richard Cartwright) appears to think that the principal question is, how many people are to be employed in this manufacture? It seems to me that the principal question is, how is this proposal going to be reconciled with the great National Policy? If the Government start a manufacture of binder twine in the penitentiary, it appears to me to be a violation of the great principle that certain persons should be allowed to tax everybody else for their own benefit.

Mr. McMILLAN (Huron). Where will the power be obtained to drive the machinery?

Mr. OUMET. One of the present buildings is being prepared to receive the machinery. I do not know with reference to the power.

Mr. PATERSON (Brant.) Have any tenders been asked for yet?

Mr. OUMET. The department is in communication with a firm in Galt, and another firm in New Jersey for that plant.

Mr. PATERSON (Brant.) Have you not inquired of any of the English manufacturers?

Mr. OUMET. I was told by the Prime Minister that negotiations had been made in England, as well as in the United States to procure the necessary machinery.

Mr. BAIN (Wentworth). Is it not true that in the United States there is considerable difficulty in getting that class of machinery?

Mr. OUMET. I think so.

Mr. BAIN (Wentworth). I have been informed that it was under the control of the combination known as the National Cordage Company, and I apprehend there will be considerable difficulty in securing that class of machinery in the United States.