

is at all possible to do so, restricting the privilege to letting the work by day labour up to \$5,000 only to cases where the conditions are extraordinary.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Queens): I might explain to the committee that the theory of the hon. member for Vancouver Centre would apply very well in provinces where contracts are let for larger works, but when you look over the list for repair works that are necessary around the province of Prince Edward Island, you will see that the highest is only \$9,000, and when you call for tenders for repairs of those works you get so little competition that in almost every case you have to pay about twice as much as it would cost to do it by day labour. While it is said that the work is done by day labour, I might point out to the committee that under this system the district engineer is authorized by the minister to take quotations and let out different classes of the work by contract. Contracts are given for piecework on different classes of construction, and in that way you can save about one-half of what it would cost if you let the whole work by contract, for the simple reason that we have very few people taking large contracts of this kind around the shores.

In regard to this special item, Rustico breakwater and beach protection, they are two different works in the same harbour. The breakwater is situated a little differently from the beach protection, so they are really two different works in the same place. We are suffering by not having had the estimates passed earlier in the session. The people of the locality can supply the timber, providing they have sufficient notice to get it out before their spring work begins, and to delay the estimate has a tendency to increase a little bit the cost of supplying the timber. North Rustico is a very important fishing station. I think it is one of the two most important harbours on the north side of the province. There are about sixty fishing boats going in and out between the port and the fishing grounds every day during the whole summer season. It is very important that this work be done during the present season, and I feel sure that if the conditions were known to the committee they would readily realize that the method followed by the department saves a considerable amount of what would be expended if contracts were insisted on for the whole work.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Does it not seem very strange to the minister that with as much work going on as is provided here in the [Mr. Stevens.]

estimates, there would not be enough people in that province to make a good competitive tender? The minister would take a long while to convince me of that.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Queens): I did not say that it was for lack of a number of people.

Mr. MEIGHEN: It is not work that requires a tremendous plant, and I would have thought the people there would have been very glad to tender on this work. The people of Prince Edward Island are certainly able and enterprising, and why they should not be ready to tender for \$84,000 worth of work provided for in the main estimates, to say nothing of provincial works, and to say nothing of competitive tenders from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, only a very short distance away, I cannot see. There is no reason why a separate system should be applied to Prince Edward Island. Does nobody in Nova Scotia come over and take business in Prince Edward Island? I do not think they hold each other in such reverence as that.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Queens): The further they come the more they will have to get for doing the work. The point I made was that if the department followed the principle of letting the work by tender, it would cost about double as much as when you give the engineer the right of taking quotations and dividing the work into smaller contracts, and getting the work done by the people in the district.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I think the "twice" is the other way about. I have never yet seen the other way fail. I have tried it myself and seen it tried by the government. These excuses for getting away from the tender system always arouse in my mind a very large interrogation point.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): My right hon. friend says there will be no tenders called for. In order that there may be no misunderstanding let me say that in this work a very considerable proportion of the expenditure, in fact the largest portion, will be for lumber, and the district engineer will call for tenders. There are 250 team loads of brush needed. That may be done by day labour or by contract. I am not sure as to that; it will depend upon what the engineer thinks best. Then there is the yardage of ballast or stone. That may be contracted for locally. In all works of this character, renewals and repairs, or at any rate in many cases, where you are uncertain as to the extent of the repairs necessary the best policy is to act upon the engineer's recommendation. If that is done the department saves money.