

would have been well if the hon. Finance Minister had at least pursued an even course of absolute fairness to the Canadian company. Had he done that, he would have been on the right side of economy and of the common sense by giving to our own people the employment we have to give.

It being Six o'clock, the Speaker left the Chair.

### After Recess.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Mr. Fielding). I hope it will not be necessary for me to occupy the attention of the House very long in reply to the observations of the hon. member for York (Mr. Foster) on the subject of the engraving contract. It appears to me, Sir, that the question that the hon. gentleman put at the close of his speech this afternoon can be answered in a very simple way. This is not a case in which a man should multiply words, because the facts of the transaction are so simple that a long speech might only serve to divert attention from them. The hon. gentleman asked, as he concluded his speech to-day, and asked with an air of, shall I say, assumed warmth, what reason there was for passing over the tender of the British American Bank Note Company, or, as we commonly speak of it, the Burland Company. Sir, there were one hundred and fifty-three thousand reasons for doing so, and every one of these reasons represented one dollar of the money of the people of Canada that is being saved by the course pursued by the Government and that would have been squandered had we followed the course recommended by the hon. gentleman this afternoon. I venture to say that if, in the face of an offer from one of the most respectable establishments in the engraving business in America, of \$153,000 better than the offer of Mr. Burland, we had accepted Mr. Burland's offer, there would have been a grave public scandal, a gross waste of the public money, and the Government would have taken a step which would have deserved, and I am sure would have received, the emphatic condemnation of this House. Now what are the simple facts of the case?

The hon. gentleman seemed to assume, and his whole argument was based on the idea, that the Burland company were entitled to some monopoly of this business. Happily, Sir, the Government have not taken that view. The facts were these: Mr. Burland's contract was about to expire. The Government, in the exercise of their judgment, for what they believed to be the best interest of the country, invited public tenders for the work. They received tenders, and they awarded the contract to the party whose tender was the lowest. This is a course which my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) is not prepared to approve of. I am afraid he

Mr. FOSTER.

has not as much faith as I have in the policy of awarding contracts to the parties whose tenders are lowest; for I think that experience has shown that hon. gentlemen opposite were not ready to regard that principle as warmly as I am disposed to regard it to-day. My hon. friend, in his speech this afternoon, was disposed to encourage the idea that the Burland company was entitled to a monopoly. I am sorry he took that view, because otherwise I might be able, on the face of the papers, to give him credit for a different opinion. That Mr. Burland and his associates felt that they should have a monopoly is quite evident, and they felt it so strongly that a year before their contract expired, they applied to the hon. gentlemen to give a private renewal of the contract. If my hon. friend will turn to page 9 of the papers, he will find that on the 17th April, 1896, a year before the contract expired, the Burland company applied to the late Government for a renewal of the contract. They pleaded in the name of this Canadian industry in behalf of which we have had so much sympathy expended to-day. They stated that in consequence of the growing importance of the business it was necessary for them to have new machinery, and they did not feel that they were in a position to put in that new machinery and extend their works unless they had an assurance of the renewal of the contract. But I regret to say, assuming that the hon. gentleman was sincere in his apparent argument this afternoon, that the Burland company was entitled to a monopoly, his action was not consistent with that; for, in the most hard-hearted way, he refused to give the extension demanded. Mr. Burland not only urged this renewal in consideration of the growing importance of the establishment, but he urged it in the interests of the hard-working people whom he employed. He said in the petition that some of his employees were working in places in that building in Wellington street which were entirely unsuited to them, and in the name of the employees, and in order that their health might not suffer, he asked for a new contract. But the hon. gentleman was deaf to the entreaty of this native industry and of these suffering sick men. He allowed the matter to go and Mr. Burland did not get a renewal of the contract.

So the matter stood until the present Government came into power. In September last we gave notice, under the terms of the contract, that the contract would expire in April, 1897, and thereupon steps were taken to invite new tenders. The hon. gentleman asked us this afternoon why such a large area was covered in the invitation. Well, Sir, I think that if you want to get competition for public contracts, the best way is to extend the invitations over the largest possible area. But if you do not want competition, if you want a private deal, you