

try. Hon. gentlemen opposite talked to us very freely about railway transactions in which the Liberal party have figured discredibly in the province of Quebec. I have nothing to do with the local financial affairs of the province of Quebec; but I want to remind the House that the gentlemen who shout so loudly about that transaction took the Hon. Mr. Mercier into court and endeavoured to establish the charges which they made against him so freely, and they signally failed.

Mr. FERGUSON (Leeds and Grenville). The grand jury gave the verdict, that is, the people.

Mr. BAIN (Wentworth). Yes, we appealed to the people of Antigonish the other day, and we saw the result.

Now, I wish to draw the attention of the House for a few moments to a case that was before the courts of Montreal only a few days ago, and I will quote from the Montreal "Gazette" of the 14th of May, 1895, a statement made by Judge Desnoyers upon the application of the Solicitor General with respect to the suit against the contractor on the Curran bridge for a refund of money which the Solicitor General claimed he had got unfairly from this Government. Let me call attention to some of the details of that transaction. It related to two bridges across the Lachine Canal and the Grand Trunk Railway. The Government engineer's first estimate of the cost of completing those bridges was \$160,000. But they proposed to make certain changes, to enable them to deepen the canal and improve the works, and the highest figure which the Government's own engineer gave as the cost of the work was \$223,000. Although the work was within two or three hours run by rail of the headquarters of the Government at Ottawa, what did they do? They paid \$394,000 for that work which their own engineer had estimated would cost \$223,000, and then they instituted a suit against their own contractors to try to get \$170,000 out of him. Let me make a few quotations from the statement of the judge upon the evidence placed before him with respect to the terms of the contract made by the department with the contractor, Mr. St. Louis. Here is a specimen of the wages which this precious economical Government contracted to pay to that contractor: A stonecutter foreman was allowed \$4 a day for day time and \$6 for night time, \$8 a day for Sunday, and \$12 a day for Sunday overtime.

Mr. STEVENSON. You need to take breath after that.

Mr. BAIN (Wentworth). You will need to draw your breath when you tell the people of Peterboro' that you contracted to pay a superintendent \$12 a day for Sunday work. A double team got \$5 a day, and, when religiously at work on Sunday, it got

\$10. What else do we find? We find that a derrick was worth \$2.75 in the daytime, but the same instrument was worth \$3.75 at night, and it was a religious derrick, because when it had to work on Sunday its conscience had to be appeased by giving it \$7.50. That was the contract made under the supervision of the Minister right here in this House. I am not speaking of what occurred outside, but of the contract that these gentlemen made with Mr. St. Louis. He went to work to carry out that contract. What does the judge say in addition? He says:

And on the same scale for stonemasons, stone-setters and skilled labourers, Mr. St. Louis' bills must have been tremendous, when it is remembered the job lasted four months, and that at times there were 2,000 men at work in the daytime and 1,500 men at work at night. The men were paid alternately every week. Mr. Michaud tells us that some of the pays amounted to \$34,000, some \$10,000, some \$15,000 and some \$20,000.

And yet that went on for four months, although all that time the Minister and his responsible subordinates could have left this House and run down to the work any afternoon, inspected what was going on, and made things right. That went on until, instead of paying out \$233,000, the Government paid nearly \$400,000, and yet they ask us to believe that they did not know anything about it, and that the whole thing was economically administered. Let any hon. gentleman go to Ontario and present those figures to the electorate and try to make them believe that this expenditure was a really honest, just and fair expenditure of public money. When we find that the contractor destroyed his books because his safe was not big enough to hold them after he got through, and when we find him declaring under oath that he had given contributions to aid the party in power, need we go any further to find a reason why this extravagance was allowed to go on unchecked? What did the judge say? Did he instruct Mr. St. Louis to pay back this money? No; he goes on to say:

There was no proper surveillance by the officers of the Government on two of the jobs at least, viz., the Grand Trunk bridge and lock No. 1 of the Lachine Canal. The time-keeping on the two latter jobs seems to have been left to take care of itself, as far as the Government officers were concerned, so much so that two prominent public officers, high in office, lost their situation on that account. Mr. St. Louis procured all the workmen that were asked of him. He did not keep time personally, he had several clerks to do it, and one of them stuffed the lists. This was sworn to by himself, to his own disgrace; and when these lists were so made and cooked, they were certified blindly and as a matter of form by the officers of the Government.

And yet this is the Government which undertakes to tell us that they are administering the affairs of the country carefully. The judge thus sums up: