

Mr. SNETSINGER. Does the ex-Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Haggart) remember giving the contract for Sheik's Dam without a tender?

Mr. HAGGART. I do not remember anything of the kind. I remember that on the recommendation of the officers of my department I granted an extension to a contractor who had the contract already, and at the lowest price.

Mr. SNETSINGER. The contract was given to Gilbert & Sons for that section.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. Perhaps the hon. gentleman can settle the question by stating whether he was Minister of Railways on the 8th of July, 1896.

Mr. HAGGART. I may have been Minister, but I may not have been there. It is very likely some one was acting Minister at the time. I do not remember that I signed anything of the kind. It is possible I did, but I have no recollection of it.

Sault Ste. Marie Canal—

To pay wages of employees whilst unoccupied owing to delays for which the Electric Company were not responsible..... \$ 624

Construction..... 80,000

To pay Contractors Hugh Ryan & Co. the cost of pulling down and rebuilding timber wall in prism of canal, &c. 5,796

Mr. HAGGART. I suppose the \$80,000 is to pay the balance of the claim of Mr. Ryan?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. Yes, this is to pay the Ryan firm.

Mr. SPROULE. I think it would be a very appropriate time for the hon. Minister to give some information with regard to the men who have been dismissed from the Sault Ste. Marie Canal. Some time ago when I asked him about them, his answer was that these men were considered as being employed only during the season of navigation, and when they were put off at the end of the season it did not necessarily follow that they would be employed again. I see that in the list handed to us to-night, out of the thirty-seven men put off there were only three re-employed. My information from some of these men is that they were dismissed without any complaint, political or otherwise, being made against them, and without receiving any information as to why they were dismissed. I would like to know on what grounds the hon. Minister has dismissed them? If on political grounds, it seems to me a very extraordinary course; if because he is adopting a new principle, of dismissing all the employees along the canal at the end of the season. I am sure he is not adopting a course which will meet with the approval of the country. There is no doubt that men leave the em-

ploy of the Government as they leave the employ of private individuals, with a good reputation or a bad one. If a man is dismissed and no reason is given for his dismissal, it will naturally be assumed by some people that he has been dismissed for not doing his duty, and this might interfere with his getting employment elsewhere. I think the Minister should tell us why he has dismissed and whether he gave them an opportunity, previous to their dismissal, to defend themselves or to refute any charges which were perhaps unjustly brought against them.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. The hon. gentleman is applying the rule to the cases of persons who are only employed temporarily, that is to say, only so long as their services are required for the season, and when the season is over and the canal is closed, they are no longer in the Government employ, and it is open to the Government in the following season to select any men for that season. There is no similarity between the cases of the men thus employed and the men who are in the civil service. I think the hon. gentleman himself will recognize that a very great distinction exists.

Mr. SPROULE. Does the hon. gentleman follow the same rule with the employees of this House, such as sessional clerks and sessional messengers, who are only employed for each year, but come back in the following year?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. They are probably in the civil service. You cannot class men employed temporarily in the capacity of labourers with men in the civil service. When the hon. gentleman says that only two of the men have been re-employed during the current year, of those who were employed last year, he is in error. He will find on looking over the list that a considerably greater number than that have been re-employed. The staff on the Sault Ste. Marie Canal was to a considerable extent reorganized. A number of men were dropped out. We proposed to get along with a smaller staff than has been customary on that canal. The reorganization of those in the higher class of employment on the canal has also been very carefully arranged for. We have considerably reduced the cost of maintaining the service on that canal, as we have on some of the others. Some of the men were unquestionably exceedingly offensive in their conduct during the election.

Mr. SPROULE. Which of them?

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. There were quite a few. The hon. member who represents that constituency could throw some light on that question. I confess I did allow myself to be guided very largely by the knowledge and