

ly to election funds and the work must be given to him although, as in the case of Owen Sound harbour quoted by the hon. member for East Grey (Mr. Sproule), others who have dredges are refused employment.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. They were not refused employment.

Mr. WALLACE. They were refused.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I say they were not.

Mr. WALLACE. I know what I am talking about.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I do not think so.

Mr. WALLACE. But the Minister of Public Works does not know what he is talking about. These men were refused employment. They had to dispose of their dredge to a combination of politicians who held the contract and simply farmed it out. This man has to do the work and the politicians get a large percentage, a good many dollars a day out of it. The Minister is doing the same thing in Toronto, and, no doubt, every place else where this department has to spend a dollar.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I am glad to see my hon. friend (Mr. Wallace) so full of virtue. I have known him for a long time, and always as a supporter of the late Government—except when he was kicking. Sometimes he kicked hard. He was a virtuous man, no doubt, in past days. Of course, all the dredges hired under the late regime were hired in the same way and at the same prices as now.

Mr. WALLACE. Not a bit of it.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Yes, every bit of it. I know all about it. No tenders were asked and no contracts given, but my hon. friend did not show such indignation then.

Mr. WALLACE. Will the hon. gentleman permit me to tell him that Toronto harbour was let by contract.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. The dredging was let along with the other work.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh; take it back.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I will not take anything back. The hon. gentlemen were very willing that this system should be carried on under their own regime.

Mr. HAGGART. Business is business.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Yes, but the business of the hon. gentlemen is getting smaller every day. If he goes on the same way, if he is here during the next Parliament, he will be even smaller than he is now. But, coming back to the point at issue, I desire to say that Mr.

Phin is supplying me with a first-class dredge. The only crime that hon. gentlemen find in him is that he is a good Reformer. That is no crime. Provided the dredge is a good one, I do not seek to learn whether he is a painter or whether he is as good a doctor as my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule). If that hon. gentleman gets a dredge and comes to me to get work for it to do, I will not ask whether he is a doctor or not. The person has nothing to do with it any more than the clerk has to do with the goods he sells—the customer judges by the goods. As I say, Mr. Phin has done good work, and I will not refuse him work because he is a Reformer.

Mr. SPROULE. Either I am wrong or the hon. Minister is wrong. The information I have, and it comes from a party who owned the dredges, is that, after reconnoitering down here as to whether they could get employment for their dredges or not, they came to the conclusion that they could not; but that this employment would go to some Reformer recommended by the member for the riding. We all know who he is—the hon. Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson). These gentlemen had this plant on their hands and, believing they could not get work owing to their being what they were—they were not active politicians but they were Conservatives—they were obliged to part with it at what they believed to be a very much reduced valuation, and it was passed over to friends of the Government who could get the work, and who got this contract. The defeated candidate for the riding, Dr. Horsey, and Mr. Barron, who was then a very active politician, was up there and some other Reform friends, who took over this plant, but they would not have taken the plant were it not for the fact that the parties who owned it could not get the dredging and, therefore, were obliged to part with their property.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I never declined to give them the work.

Mr. SPROULE. I do not know whether he did or not, all I know is this: My information is to the effect that after coming down here and trying to find out whether they could get the work, they went away under the impression, from whatever source, that they could not get the work, and, therefore, they disposed of their plant. Now, with regard to the other feature, I repeat that in my judgment the duty of the Government, whenever they have public works to give out, is to ascertain whether the men who tender are able to do the work properly, otherwise they must expect trouble. Suppose a man proposes to take a large contract from the Government to build a railway, what should the Government do? Ascertain whether that contractor has the ability to carry out the contract, whether he has experience, whether he has the plant,