

the local papers, then only contractors in the larger cities would have an opportunity to tender. There is a possible explanation of the fact that Ottawa men get a good many contracts, in that Ottawa men know perfectly well that they must tender just as low as they can if they want to get a contract. Some men who live in the locality of these public works think that they can tender pretty high and still get the work, but the Ottawa men know how keen the competition is, and they tender low. Then, again, they make a specialty of contracting; they are professional contractors; they have the staff and the plant, and they buy their cement in thousands of barrels, and they buy their timber in the cheapest market, and hence their success in tendering. Sometimes a local man, as in the case of Doucet's Landing, may succeed.

Mr. BERGERON. Then why not advertise only in the Ottawa papers?

Mr. FISHER. Because we want to be fair to the other people, and give them a chance to tender. But we do not want them to get this work at the public expense. We want the work to be done as cheaply as possible, and so we give every one a chance to do it as cheaply as possible, and in the end the best man gets the contract.

Mr. BERGERON. What will be the total cost of this work at Grands Mechins?

Mr. FISHER. Not including the time we have wasted on it here to-night, it will cost \$30,000.

Mr. BERGERON. When will it be completed?

Mr. FISHER. October, 1907.

Mr. BERGERON. In what county is it?

Mr. FISHER. Rimouski.

Mr. MONK. There is a very easy solution of the advertising question. It has grown to be a terrible abuse, and I am sure we must spend between \$50,000 and \$80,000 a year advertising.

Mr. J. D. REID. They spent \$22,000 advertising the Grand Trunk Pacific.

Mr. MONK. We spend sometimes as much as \$500 to advertise for a contract of \$4,000 and very often it is not given. We find that estimate comes up here year after year, it has become a gross abuse. Will the minister pretend that if we advertised for tenders in the Canada Official Gazette, we would get no tenders.

Mr. FISHER. I do.

Mr. MONK. Everybody knows that contractors are limited in number, the minister has just indicated that himself. He says

Mr. FISHER.

most of them reside in Ottawa and being near the source they provide themselves with what is necessary. I say if we advertise for tenders in the 'Canada Gazette' and carry it out systematically we will save from \$65,000 to \$75,000 a year and get any number of tenderers. To go a step further suppose we had a mailing list as they have in England and in France. Do you suppose they waste public money there in that way? I defy my hon. friend to say they do.

Mr. FISHER. I do not.

Mr. MONK. He knows they do not. It has grown into an abuse here. If we advertise our public works for tender in the 'Canada Gazette' and posted notices throughout the post offices where the works are to be, what would it cost us? Not one dollar and we would be the richer by \$70,000 to \$75,000 every year, have better competition and be able to devote that money to other works. It began in a small way but it has grown into an abuse and I verily believe that if my hon. friend, who is a practical man, would introduce that reform he would find that tenders would come in as freely as ever, and I would be curious to know if we could get a return in how many cases we have given a contract in the last two years to the lowest tenderer, fair and square.

Mr. FISHER. Fair and square as far as I can say, we have given it to the lowest tenderer in every case but one since I came into the department.

Mr. MONK. That is about two weeks.

Mr. BERGERON. What is the length of that breakwater at Grands Mechins?

Mr. FISHER. The stone bridge is 20 feet long and 20 feet wide and the cribwork 580 feet.

Mr. BERGERON. It is to be 16 feet at low water?

Mr. FISHER. It says here 18 feet 3 inches.

Mr. BERGERON. If I understand, tenders were called for in 1904, and there was no response, then in October, 1904, when there was no contract given, the department bought wood to the tune of \$3,457.

Mr. FISHER. They bought that in preparation for the work by day labour.

Mr. BERGERON. Would my hon. friend approve of that?

Mr. FISHER. They had an item in the estimates for this pier. It did not seem likely that it would go by contract, and when they could not get tenders they proceeded to get timber and prepare for the completion of the work. Then tenders were asked for again and they got a contract.

Mr. BERGERON. It smells very much like election.