

*Supply—Harbours and Rivers*

Bagotville (St. Alphonse)—Wharf repairs and improvements, \$1,850.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): This is for urgent renewals to cribwork face—timbers, cross-ties, stringers and flooring, and to complete a new freight shed.

Mr. LEWIS: Is that completing the work that was done last year?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): Yes, practically.

Mr. LADNER: Was the appropriation of last year supposed to cover the entire repairs and improvements?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): No.

Mr. LADNER: What work was deferred?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): Last year's work consisted of construction of freight shed and renewing part of crib work under the old shed to a height of four feet.

Mr. LADNER: Is this in the nature of extension?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): It will be a continuation. It might be said to be new repair work. Then there is some expenditure to complete the work on the shed that was undertaken last year.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): Was the work last year done by contract or day labour?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): I should think it would be day labour, yes.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): Last year?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): Yes.

Mr. STEVENS: Here we have a striking example bearing out the criticisms I have been offering. Last year parliament passed a vote of \$8,500 in good faith thinking that it would be used to do certain work. The minister builds a warehouse for the housing of goods landed at a wharf—one of the most suitable things for a contract that one can imagine. A simple contract with a carpenter, any number of whom can be found in any neighbourhood, could have accomplished this work; it is carpentering of the simplest sort. The minister however comes back this year and asks for \$1,850 more. What does he want that extra money for? Last year his engineers told him that the work could be done for \$8,500 but he says now that no tenders were called for. This is bearing out my criticism that the department has been departing from a general principle which it is most desirable that the government should scrupulously observe. I am not at all criticising the item; I am not suggesting that it is

[Mr. J. H. King.]

unnecessary nor that the work should not be done. But I do insist that this is a matter which should seriously engage the attention of the committee. We are now in the last days of the session and hon. members are all anxious to get the work of parliament completed. And in this period of rush we are being asked to put the stamp of approval on a violation of principle to which I am positively opposed, as I am sure the committee and parliament would be also if the matter were given proper consideration. The minister at least owes it to the committee to explain this particular item. Invariably these votes include contingencies; I would call to witness the item of \$11,000 passed a few minutes ago in a previous vote. In that instance the minister told us that he required only \$9,000 of the \$11,000 and when I suggested, not very vigorously I admit, that the vote should be reduced the minister replied that he did not think it would be desirable to reduce it inasmuch as it was always necessary to provide against contingencies. I agree with him in that respect; I certainly think that contingencies should be taken into account. But that was the very reason why we voted \$8,500 last year; I remember that that sum was represented as covering contingencies. Instead of calling for tenders however for an ordinary piece of work like this, the minister has had it done by day labour under the control of the officers of the department; and he comes back to us now to have another vote of \$1,800 passed. If we wanted any proof of the folly of departing from the principle of tenders and contract work, we have it right here. I want an explanation from the minister. As a matter of fact there is no explanation that can remedy the thing, but the minister might make some statement approaching an argument to justify a course which the government apparently is bent on pursuing. The vote last year was for \$8,500, and I would remind the committee of the principle which has been respected for so many years of regarding \$5,000 as the absolute limit up to which work of this nature might be done without contract. That principle has been ignored in this case.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): The point is not well taken. The hon. gentleman says that this shed should have been built by contract. Well, we are not only constructing a new shed but we are taking care of the cribwork of the old structure; we are renewing some of the cross ties, the stringers, the flooring and so on. In other words, you have a partial renewal with a new construction.