

ture of any kind, I suppose the commission would have no authority to interfere. They simply rubber-stamp the requisition, it goes in as a matter of course, no matter what its character may be. I submit that this Bill is a monstrous thing, and that subsection 2 of section 12 destroys whatever value there might otherwise be in the proposal.

Mr. THOMAS HAY (Selkirk): As I represent a constituency in which most of the Dominion public works in Manitoba are located I wish to say just a word respecting this Bill.

I do not quarrel with the principle of the Bill, although it seems to me that if you have a staff of expert purchasers you may create a department which will be a very great expense to the country. I have had many complaints from the superintendents of the different works in the county from which I come with respect to purchases. Most of the dredging plants in Manitoba are located in that county, as well as the fishing industries, dry docks, and other public works; and the purchases there are considerable each year. The St. Andrew's locks are also located in that county. I am informed that under the present system goods which are purchased are costing more than they cost under the old system. I do not know how correct that is; up to the present I have not had a chance of looking into the matter. As I understand it, under the old system the heads of the departments there were allowed to do the purchasing, and they were in a position to buy more cheaply because of their particular knowledge of the requirements. I do not know whether these purchases were made by the Purchasing Commission or not; the requisitions were made to the district engineer at Winnipeg. Circulars were sent out to these wholesale houses in Winnipeg—I do not think they went outside of Winnipeg—and the purchases were made from those wholesale houses. The local men in the town of Selkirk, in which these industries are located, were not given a chance to bid on these purchases; notices were not sent to them at all. I am informed that if these men had had an opportunity of tendering they could have furnished these supplies more cheaply than they were furnished by the wholesale houses of Winnipeg, because the cost of the supplies, including freight, cartage, and other incidental charges, was greater than it would have been had the purchases been made in the town of Selkirk by the superintendents of the different public works.

We should be careful at this time not to create any more commissions which will be a burden to the country. Under the old system, if it was properly carried out, we would be in a better position to get value for our money than we will be if purchases are made through a commission

5 p.m. who will really, in any case, have to take the word of the superintendents of the different departments. They have no other means of finding out whether or not the supplies are necessary; they must accept the advice of the superintendents of the different works. These superintendents are on the spot; they know what is required, and they should be trusted to make the purchases for their departments.

I believe that complaints were made to the Public Works Department with regard to the right of the superintendents to make small purchases, and that the superintendents have been allowed to purchase only to the extent of \$5. I would like this Bill to provide that the superintendents be allowed to purchase up to a greater amount than that; I believe money would be saved if they were. They should be allowed to purchase such articles as steam fittings and pipes, and other articles which they may need and which can be secured in almost any town in which these public works are located. Time and money would be saved by adopting this plan. In cases where requisitions have been made to the District Engineer at Winnipeg for supplies amounting to \$25 or \$30, delays have occurred and the job has had to wait until the supplies came to hand. If, in cases like that, the superintendent had the right to purchase locally up to a certain amount, time and money would be saved, the work would proceed without interruption and the country would be benefited.

I ask the minister in charge of the Bill to give this matter, which is one of great importance to the country, careful consideration, and to see whether some arrangement can be made under which purchases may be made by the men in charge of these different public works throughout the country.

Sir ROBERT BORDEN (Prime Minister): I have taken a good deal of interest in the proposal, which hitherto has been carried out by Order in Council, that purchases on behalf of the Government during the war period should be made by an absolutely independent commission. Looking back upon conditions as they were before and as they were after that commission was established, I have not the slightest doubt that many