

We have departed a little from the announcement made last night, but this has been done after consultation with the two leaders opposite. We will take up Public Works for the rest of the evening.

#### PUBLIC WORKS

Public Works—public buildings—rent, repairs, furniture, heating, etc., \$4,959,600.

Hon. J. H. KING (Kootenay, Minister of Public Works): The first three items in this vote have been passed.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Subject, I think, to getting some information as to what was spent last year.

The CHAIRMAN: That reservation does not apply to the first three items; they have been passed. The item now under consideration is the fourth:

Lighting, including roads and bridges, \$90,000.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Then we will ask for information regarding this item.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): The amount spent last year up to the 31st of March was \$80,084.59.

Mr. GUTHRIE: Can you not get on with \$80,000 this year as well?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): The accounts are probably not all in yet. I notice that in 1920-21 the expenditure was about \$88,696.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Well, costs are going down now.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): There was a contract let last year for lighting, and I imagine that this estimate is based upon it.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Are things not cheaper this year? I thought the Government was to bring about a lowering in the cost of living.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): These contracts were entered into on the first of October, 1921.

Mr. MEIGHEN: For how long?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): For five years.

Mr. MEIGHEN: How much does that cover of this amount?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): The contract covers the lighting of the Parliament buildings, and all buildings owned or rented by the Government in the city of Ottawa.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Amounting to what proportion of this vote?

Mr. KING (Kootenay): \$63,000.

Mr. MEIGHEN: What is the rate?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Mr. Chairman, I heard you announce the fact that the item had reference to public buildings, but in this corner we have not been able to hear a single word since that announcement. We are here to discuss public affairs and if we cannot hear what is going on, then we ought to meet in a chamber in which we can hear. It is simply impossible two-thirds of the time for members at this end of the House to tell what business is being transacted at the other end.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): The particular item before the committee is a vote of \$90,000 for lighting, including roads and bridges.

Mr. GOOD: If hon. members would only realize that there are others in the chamber who would like to hear the questions they ask besides those to whom those questions are addressed, the proceedings would be much more satisfactory. There are hon. members back here who tell me they have not heard one-quarter of what has been going on, and it is really too bad. It is simply scandalous that such a condition should prevail, and we who are expected to participate intelligently in the discussion of public affairs should be able to hear what hon. gentlemen are saying. I wish to protest although I do not see why it should be necessary to do so. There would be no cause for protest if hon. members would only bear in mind that there are other gentlemen in the chamber besides themselves for whom they ought to have some consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: I may remark that the difficulty lies not so much with hon. gentlemen who are discussing the items under consideration, as in the fact that there is an incessant conversation in an undertone among hon. members themselves all over the chamber.

Mr. GARDINER: May I ask a question, Mr. Chairman? What are the duties of a chairman?

Mr. MEIGHEN: We have not yet had an answer to the question I asked regarding the rate.

Mr. KING (Kootenay): The lighting rate is 5 cents per kilowatt hour for the first thirty hours, monthly use of installed capacity, and 2.2 cents per kilowatt hour for the next seventy hours, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent per kilowatt hour thereafter for monthly use. There is a discount upon