

The Minister
of Public
Works.
The French
River section
and a new
Commission.

55. On the 28th May, 1913, a discussion took place in the House of Commons, upon a proposal made by the Minister of Public Works, Mr. Rogers, to include in the Estimates the following item—" French River Waterway Improvement \$500,000."

In the Estimates of the previous year \$500,000 had been included in the Estimates generally on account of the " Montreal, Ottawa and Georgian Bay Canal," but no portion of the appropriation was spent. The Estimates of the previous year contained an appropriation of \$3,000,000, which was withdrawn.

Upon the motion to appropriate \$500,000 for the French River Waterway, Mr. Rogers stated that having only been in the Department of Public Works for a short time, he was not in a position to present either to his colleagues or to the Parliament a definite proposal as to the construction of the Georgian Bay Canal.

Quoting a report of the Commission appointed by Sir W. Laurier's Government, Mr. Rogers stated that he considered that report as a recommendation of the route via the French River as a link in connection with the Georgian Bay Canal.

The Minister of Public Works then stated that it was the intention of the Government to appoint a Commission to investigate the commercial side of the question of the Canal, the engineering questions having already been dealt with in the report of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Government. "In the meantime," said Mr. Rogers, " we propose to develop the French River Section, and this will, I trust, if it is the " recommendation of the Commission selected, to give the fullest consideration to the " commercial aspect of this project, serve the purpose of forming an important part " of that great undertaking, the Georgian Bay Canal."

The following is an extract from the discussion which then took place :—

" Mr. Graham: It is quite important that the Committee should understand what " we are doing with the vote of \$500,000. If we are committed to \$15,000,000 " (this being the amount stated by Mr. Rogers as the cost of the French River " section), then the Georgian Bay Canal is started.

" Mr. Rogers: You would not expect us to undertake to commit ourselves to the " whole project without having the report of a Commercial Commission which recom- " mended the work, and I think it is very sound judgment on their part, I entirely " approve of it, and I propose to appoint this Commission at once, and have a " report on the commercial value of the undertaking.

" Mr. Graham: We want a plain statement of what we are doing. The Govern- " ment is not announcing a policy of constructing the Georgian Bay Canal by this " vote?

" Mr. Rogers: Not yet.

" Mr. Graham: It is asking for \$500,000 to start work that will cost, when com- " pleted as far as North Bay, \$15,000,000, and if we are committed to an expendi- " ture of \$15,000,000, then the Georgian Bay Canal is started and will be completed, " because the Government would scarcely ask for \$15,000,000 which would probably " be \$20,000,000 or \$25,000,000 before that particular work would be completed to " North Bay, without the largest project in view. Then I think we can take it for " granted that this \$500,000 is merely for a preliminary skirmish on the French River " for the building of a dam and incidentally the developing of some water power. Do

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