

During the fiscal year ended March 31, 1919, provisions were purchased in fifteen departments, dry goods in sixteen, hardware in eighteen, mechanical goods in eighteen, drugs, chemicals and scientific articles in sixteen. This Bill proposes that men shall be engaged as specialists in these different branches of purchasing. One man, for instance, will be an expert on groceries and provisions. It will be his duty to

4 p.m. study the markets, to know the goods, to find out when it will be most favourable for those who are able to tender to supply the goods to the Government. He will select articles as standards that are most generally used, in order to permit a larger number to submit tenders for the supplying of those goods.

Another thing we should consider is that the goods themselves must be carefully inspected; tests and analyses of certain articles will be necessary. This commission can better employ these experts and get much better general results in that respect. I know of an instance where a manufacturer was asked to tender for a certain article. He tendered at a wholesale price to the War Purchasing Department, but they purchased the goods from a jobber at a higher price. Now, the Purchasing Department were led to believe that the goods they were purchasing represented better value than those which the manufacturer in question offered to supply; but it turned out that the goods were the same as those bid on by the manufacturer. I do not blame the War Purchasing Commission for that, but under the new system that difficulty would be overcome.

Sir SAM HUGHES: How would it be overcome?

Mr. HAROLD: If a man deceived the department, it would be known to all departments, whereas if he was dealing separately with different departments it might be known only to one. Under this system the standard of the goods will be set down, samples will have to be submitted, and if the commission does its duty—and I believe it will; if it does not, it is for the House to see that it does—they will see that if goods bid on are claimed to be superior, those goods must be proved to be superior. I think, therefore, that the arguments advanced with regard to certain defects in the purchasing system will really tend to strengthen this Bill in the estimation of the House.

The people are looking to the Government to set an example of efficiency and justice

in the conduct of the business of the country. We are undertaking responsibilities in a business way which we never thought would be necessary. We have undertaken the operation of great railroad systems, and if this Government does not adopt a sound, honest, and efficient policy with regard to such business as the purchasing for the different departments, the country will not have confidence in its ability even to direct, through its officials, the National Railway System.

I have had some experience in connection with the organization of just such a department as this. A large business which was organized some twenty years ago and which controls a number of amalgamated factories, saw the advisability of uniting the purchasing branches of the various departments in a central head office. Accordingly, they adopted that system, continued it ever since, and have found it most successful. The point brought out by the President of the Council (Hon. Mr. Rowell) with regard to the desirability of buying in quantities was one of the advantages which commended itself to the firm.

Moreover, the requirements of the different departments are varied, and considerable loss will result to the country unless there is some method of transferring goods from one department to another in the case of there being a surplus stock on hand. It is the duty of this commission to know the stocks of goods in the various departments, and to see that goods are transferred from one department to another if it is to the advantage of the country that that should be done.

This is an opportune time for this question to come before the House. Yesterday the Budget was presented by our able Finance Minister (Sir Thomas White) in a masterly way. He advised us to produce and to save; and in adopting, the day following the Budget, a system of purchasing which, in my opinion, will save this country millions of dollars, is establishing a very good object lesson.

I had the privilege a short time ago of calling at the offices of the War Purchasing Commission where I had an interview with Mr. W. P. Gundy and I wish to endorse the words uttered by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Rowell) with regard to the services of the late Mr. Gundy to Canada and also with regard to the services of the other gentlemen who gave their time untiringly to the work of this commission.