

Mr. BERGERON. It was the Department of Railways and Canals, but the same principle was carried out. The contract was given to Mr. Connolly, and a year after it was decided to extend the work in the harbour of St. John to the extent of \$700,000. It was given to Mr. Connolly without tender. Mr. Blair explained at the time that it was the practice to continue the contract to the man who first obtained it. The man who first obtained the contract had probably made an arrangement with the tenderers lower than he was to have them disappear. I don't know how he did it. We on this side are justified in endeavouring to prevent that kind of thing going on in the future.

Mr. BUREAU. What is your suggestion?

Mr. BERGERON. To do what the spirit of the law says as well as what the letter of the law says. In 1896, one of the ministers of the new government winked at the others and said: The letter of the law says you must not give any work without calling for tenders for work that costs more than \$5,000, but you can let it by piecemeal in contracts under \$5,000; and that minister built a \$14,000 fence around Major Hill Park by giving out contracts for less than \$5,000 at a time. That is the way the law is evaded by the government to-day, and that is why it is useless to advertise in newspapers.

Mr. BUREAU. These particular items we are discussing are all for contracts given to the lowest tenderers. If my hon. friend (Mr. Bergeron) meant anything, he meant to insinuate that there must be collusion between the Minister of Public Works, or the deputy minister, or the chief engineer, and the Ottawa contractors to give them the advantage over other contractors. I do not see how that could be. These gentlemen opposite complain that advertising costs too much, and in the same breath they charge the government with not advertising enough. I do not know what they are driving at. Does my hon. friend (Mr. Bergeron) want the government to cease advertising on the ground of economy, or does he want the government to continue advertising and have an inquisitorial board into the methods pursued by the Ottawa contractors? The government is giving the contracts to the lowest tenderers, and to get the lowest tenderers you must have publicity. There are complaints that we advertise in the Liberal newspapers, but that is easily explained, because we want the advertisements to be read by the greatest number of people, and hence the Liberal newspapers get the notices. The hon. gentleman again complains that we publish the advertisements in country newspapers. Well, if we confine the advertisements to newspapers published in Montreal, Quebec and Ottawa, he

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would raise his hands and exclaim: You stand by the rich people in the big cities; there must be graft. It is hard to satisfy my hon. friend. If the contractors combine and some withdraw their tenders, what are you going to do about it? The only thing to do would be that if a man is awarded a contract and makes a deposit, the department could forfeit his deposit. I do not see what distinction my hon. friend draws between the letter and the spirit of the law. The letter of the law says the government must advertise in the public press, and the government do that. The Liberal newspapers, no more than the Conservative newspapers, are not going to give their advertising space for nothing; it is only fair and just that they should charge for it. But the whole thing appears to come down to this, that the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) must find fault with the Minister of Public Works, no matter what he does.

Mr. BERGERON. I do not want my hon. friend (Mr. Bureau) to draw on his imagination to that extent, and when he calls the acting Minister of Public Works the Minister of Justice, he is simply trying to be facetious. I know the officers of the Department of Public Works, and I would not for a moment suggest that they would enter into any understanding with the contractors of Ottawa. But, if the Solicitor General looks at who the contractors are, he will find that most of them are from Ottawa.

Mr. BUREAU. They are the lowest tenderers.

Mr. BERGERON. Even admitting that to shorten the discussion, the fact is that men living in the neighbourhood of these public works tender as low as they can, and they cannot get the contract.

Mr. C. DEVLIN. This very contract at Doucet's Landing is held by a man living on the spot.

Mr. BERGERON. There may be one or two cases of that kind, but nine out of every ten of these contractors reside in Ottawa. I do not understand it, and I am trying to get information, not from the Solicitor General, but from the Minister of Public Works.

Mr. FISHER. Does the hon. gentleman (Mr. Bergeron) want us not to advertise, and not to give the public at large an opportunity to tender?

Mr. BERGERON. Carry out the law; and if you do advertise, advertise all over the Dominion.

Mr. FISHER. But the whole complaint of my hon. friend is that we are advertising too widely and spending too much money on it. If we do not advertise in