

statute. The Minister of Justice at that time took steps to bring the question under the notice of the provinces, who have the jurisdiction to which my hon. friend refers, and they instructed their attorney general, or some one on their behalf, to prosecute, and the government of the Dominion employed counsel also to see that the case was properly put before the courts in order to secure, if possible, the condemnation of those who had violated the law.

Hon. Sir OLIVER MOWAT—I am exceedingly glad to know how concerned my hon. friend opposite is for the purity and the principles of purity on which the government should be conducted. I expect good results from the manifestation of sentiment on that subject which he has given us to-day and on previous occasions. I perceive also that in the present matter he has not suggested any wrong whatever on the part of the Minister of Public Works. On the contrary my hon. friend has said that it is an exceedingly reasonable thing, when there are two or more tenders, and these the lowest, for the same amount, that the contract should be given to one of the two being a friend of the government. The only wrong that my hon. friend has been calling the attention of the House to is the wrong of a person to whom the clerk of public works wrote informing him of the two tenders and asking his opinion as to which should be accepted. My hon. friend has referred to the fact that sometimes Liberals got contracts under his government. Surely my hon. friend does not mean to say that these were not exceptional cases. Every one knows that almost all the contracts did in some way or other get into the hands of his supporters. Occasionally there may have been a case of a different kind. So we know that all, or nearly all, of the officials of the government were of their own party, while occasionally an appointment was made of some one who was not a member of that party. I do not know that it is expedient to discuss these party questions in this House. It is very difficult to avoid party references in discussing even this question; my hon. friend has made some; I shall not follow him in that, unless what I have said already is following him to some extent. I think this House will perform a more useful part if they discuss

measures free from party attacks and party defences. This House now largely belongs to one party, and yet will have occasion to consider very important measures coming up from the other House and if these measures are to be considered under the influence of party feeling, if party feeling is to be stimulated among the members of this House, the Senate will be useless for the purpose for which it was intended. This single instance of wrong-doing, supposing the facts to be as the public journals say they were, illustrates that the established practice of asking any one to say which of two tenders, equally low, should be accepted, is a dangerous practice. This is the first instance that has occurred under the present government in which any harm has resulted from the practice, that any one has taken advantage of it to get a bonus from one or the other tenderer. But there may be instances, of course, of which we know nothing. I quite feel it to be desirable, in such cases, that some other method should be adopted for the purpose of determining to whom the contract in such a case should go. If the minister himself is aware of the proper person, or can get information without putting it in the power of any one to make a bargain such as this party may have intended to make, that course might be followed. Or he might re-advertise. Sometimes that is not worth while. Sometimes it might not result favourably; still it is an alternative which may be considered in such cases, in view of all the circumstances. Without further reference to the observations of my hon. friend, this is the answer I make to his question:

It is stated that Mr. Petit denies the accuracy of what has been published as his letter. He is to be officially called on for an explanation if there is any. I need not say that the letter was unauthorized by the Minister of Public Works, and has by him been condemned; and it is well known that the letter has been made use of in a public journal to justify a libellous attack on the minister, for which legal proceedings are now pending. When an answer to the official communication to Mr. Petit is received, or a reasonable time has elapsed without any answer, the government will consider what course is to be taken.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—When the hon. gentleman says it is stated