

Government placed in their hands. With regard to the engineers, he had had a little experience in the Department himself, and could not call to mind any case in which their reports were confidential. He thought that the duty of the engineers was rather to state, from a professional point of view, the nature of the works to be undertaken, the number and regularity of the tenders, with such recommendations as might be thought desirable for the guidance of the Minister. If necessary, the engineers should report on the character of the contractors, whether they were fit and proper persons to be entrusted with a public work, whether or not they had previously acted dishonestly, or caused delays and embarrassment to the Government. Such communications could be kept separate, and treated as confidential. But, with regard to any other matter, the action of those public officers should surely be submitted to the review of Parliament. He could understand that it would be very unfair to those officers to submit their private and confidential reports to Parliament without their having been previously informed that such a course was to be adopted. But, he thought the practice of receiving and acting upon these private reports unfortunate, as tending to excite suspicion in the public mind with regard to the *bona fides* of Ministers. They all remembered that it was the practice of the hon. leader of the Opposition, when Minister of Public Works, and when challenged before the House, or the people, with reference to matters of administration in his Department, to fall back on his engineers, and content himself with the statement that they had made this or that recommendation. In his capacity as a public man, he (Mr. McDougall) had felt justified in arraigning that hon. gentleman for not having exercised his own discretion and judgment, for not having acted upon his own responsibility in matters involving such important consequences to the people. His hon. friend the present Minister of Public Works, on more than one platform had agreed with him (Mr. McDougall) in his condemnation of that objectionable practice. Now, he believed, without expressing any doubt, or lack of confidence in the honesty, ability or integrity of the Min-

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ister of Public Works, and his colleagues, that it would be to the advantage of the Government and greatly to the comfort of their friends, since certain matters had been challenged in the public press—since statements had been made as to the commission of acts wearing an appearance of irregularity or of divergence from the ordinary course—if all those transactions were made plain, and all the facts put before the House and the country. He assumed there had been nothing wrong; but was afraid, if the reports of the engineers were suppressed, if information due to Parliament and the country was withheld, if private conferences were held between the present and the late Minister of Public Works on such subjects—in view of the charges against that hon. gentleman—it might be suspected by some, that he desired to cover up his own misdeeds, when in office, by approving of similar transactions on the part of his successor. That suspicion might arise, and he did hope, with regard to those reports, that, if there was anything in them of a confidential character—any personal reflections, on the part of the engineers—those passages would be eliminated, and that the House would be permitted to see the portions dealing with the material facts of the case, in order that hon. members and the whole country might judge as to the propriety of the final determinations of the Government.

MR. MACKENZIE said that the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Macdougall) was quite mistaken if he meant that he (Mr. Mackenzie) initiated any new practice when Minister of Public Works. He initiated no new practice whatever. But he could recollect some few reports in respect to particular persons, some confidential remarks as to the moral standing of tenderers for public work, which he did not think it desirable to make public. But he had no recollection of any engineers' reports or papers on public works, called for, having been refused. The hon. gentleman said he had arraigned him for desiring to shelter himself behind engineers' reports. He was mistaken, as he (Mr. Mackenzie) had always assumed the full responsibility of his transactions; but he had stated that his course in certain matters was