

ness for months and years. I think the hon. member for Welland (Mr. McCleary), who sits beside the hon. gentleman (Mr. Sproule), will be able to give him some information about it.

Mr. McCLEARY. How many years has he been contractor?

The MINISTER OF CUSTOMS. I do not know. But it was some time before he undertook dredging. I think the hon. member for Welland will agree to that. If I am not mistaken, he is a member of a firm that had a very large contract in connection with the Sarnia tunnel. I believe that the hon. member was a member of a contracting firm that tendered—unsuccessfully, it is true, but still tendered—for some specially heavy work on the canals. I mention this to show that the gentleman has been connected with a contracting firm and that it is in his line to take contracts in connection with public works. When I have given the hon. gentleman that information, he will see how far wrong he was in his criticism based upon newspaper reports. And, if he was so wholly mistaken upon that point, the doubt may possibly enter his mind whether his other criticism was sound. I mention this to set the hon. gentleman right, as his objection seemed to be that this work had been given to a painter, he may feel easy in his mind to know the work had been given to a contractor.

Mr. SPROULE. I do not see that the hon. gentleman (Mr. Paterson) has succeeded in enlightening the House very much. He says this gentleman is a contractor. But we find men now taking contracts who were not known as contractors before, but who now get the farming out jobs and so find it worth while to start business as contractors. The hon. gentleman seemed to think that I was wasting the time of the House in trying to elicit information. But he took up a good deal of time and gave us no information either about the contractor or about this job.

The MINISTER OF CUSTOMS. I gave correct information.

Mr. SPROULE. I fail to see where it came in. He discredited the reports of the newspapers. I said that I had seen the statement I gave in a newspaper and that if it was correct we might fairly call upon the Minister of Public Works to know whether he considered this a sound way of proceeding.

The MINISTER OF CUSTOMS. The hon. gentleman said that it was correct and proceeded on that assumption.

Mr. SPROULE. I emphatically deny that assertion.

Mr. SUTHERLAND. I think I can disabuse the minds of hon. gentlemen opposite as to this man. As this discussion has

taken place in Parliament, the public might get the impression that Mr. Phin was taking contracts and farming them out, getting work that he was not qualified to do or entitled to get. I wish to say most emphatically that this gentleman is well and favourably known as a man and as a business man throughout a wide circle. He is a man of good business ability and in good financial standing, quite responsible for his work and well able to perform it. If the other Ministers are as successful in getting men of the character of Mr. Phin, I do not think they will make a mistake in choosing them. This gentleman's people live in the adjoining county to my own. I am sorry that neither of the hon. members for Waterloo are present. I have no doubt that they, one on one side of the House and one on the other, would speak highly of this gentleman. As he has been connected with large works as my hon. friend (Mr. Paterson) has said, some of the largest in the province, under the large railway companies, and, I think, under the previous Government, he is a man who is quite entitled to tender for work and worthy to do work for the department so long as he lives up to the rules and regulations. He is thoroughly qualified and responsible for his work.

Mr. SPROULE. Did he own any dredges?

Mr. SUTHERLAND. He must have owned dredges or he would not have taken the work.

Mr. SPROULE. I understand the Minister to say that he did not own them.

Mr. SUTHERLAND. My hon. friend ought to know that the firm of which he was a member owned a good deal of plant, and was in a good financial position. Whether a dredge belongs to that plant, I do not know. I am speaking of my own knowledge covering a number of years when I say that I do not know a young man in the country to which he belongs who is more favourably known than Mr. Phin. I do not know about the particulars of his business, he does not live in my constituency, but I do know that his reputation as a business man is of the best. Hon. members have been misinformed altogether if they have heard any information derogatory to the standing and character of Mr. Phin as a business man, or in any other respect.

Mr. SPROULE. Nobody said anything against his character, he may be the most respectable man in the world, we never questioned that. The contention we put up was this: There was a large amount of work to be done, and the principle heretofore followed has been that such work should be let by tender and contract. In this case tenders were not called for, the contract was given to a man, and the Minister of Public Works admitted he was not