

done in British Columbia. This is a small amount but when you add these sums together they come to a very large figure. This money is thrown away with the system the government have adopted of giving the contract to their own friends after sending letters to a few of them. There is another thing. Why is it that the contractors who get these contracts for work located as far away as below Quebec almost all live in Ottawa? There seems to be a little combine amongst contractors living here and they get the contracts right and left. People living outside complain that they cannot get any work at all.

Mr. BUREAU. Do they tender ?

Mr. BERGERON. They tender.

Mr. FISHER. Contracts are given to the lowest tenderers whether they happen to live in Ottawa or anywhere else. My hon. friend would be the first to complain if we did not give the contract to the lowest tenderer. If we did not publicly advertise, it would be said, as my hon. friend said a few moments ago, that we sent letters to our friends and asked them to tender and did not give other people an opportunity. There is no satisfying my hon. friend. If we advertise for tenders all over the country he is dissatisfied. If we write letters to people he is dissatisfied. It is evident he wants to criticise.

Mr. BERGERON. No, I do not want to criticise. It is all a sham; I know very well how it is done. The hon. gentleman will go out and tell the people that they advertised for tenders. I am not criticising him for that but I say it is sham advertising. It is a way of giving patronage to the newspapers and it is not fulfilling the spirit of the law which says that tenders must be called for all over the Dominion. There is no obligation to give the contract to the lowest tenderer. There is a clause in the advertisement calling for tenders saying that the government does not bind itself to give the contract to the lowest tenderer. Practically these works are given to a few contractors around Ottawa. I do not want to make any insinuations but how is it that these contractors who are around here are always the lowest and have better information than if they did not reside at Ottawa ?

Mr. FISHER. It is not true that they are always the lowest. Sometimes they are and sometimes they are not.

Mr. BERGERON. But those who get the contracts are.

Mr. FISHER. Yes, but they are not always Ottawa people.

Mr. BERGERON. A good many of them are. Mr. Bourque has contracts right and left. How is it that they are always the lowest tenderers, lower than those who are

Mr. BERGERON.

living near where the works are done? Contractors in their own districts cannot compete with the contractors living around Ottawa. I repeat that the money that is spent for advertising is money thrown away and that it is merely given as patronage for the newspapers.

Mr. FISHER. My hon. friend may say that but if we were not to give the contract to the lowest tenderer the first to raise a row would be hon. gentlemen opposite. They would accuse us of favouritism and everything under the sun. There is a clause saying we need not give it to the lowest tenderer but my hon. friend knows that the only excuse for that is that the lowest tenderer is not a proper person or he has been shown to be an unsatisfactory contractor. Such a case may arise. I know that a certain person did not obtain a contract because he had previously got contracts that had been unsatisfactorily performed and he was refused another contract although he was the lowest tenderer. If we were to send around to our friends privately the hon. gentleman would object. When we advertise publicly all over the country and we give the contract to the lowest tenderer provided he is a contractor who is able to carry out the work then we remove it from criticism and my hon. friend ought to be glad to have us do it.

Mr. BERGERON. I am not glad. I will give an example to my hon. friend. There was some work in the harbour of St. John. Tenders were invited. There were four tenderers. Three of them disappeared. The lowest, the second lowest and the third lowest disappeared and the fourth, or the man who put in the highest price, got the contract.

Mr. FISHER. I would like to know what work my hon. friend refers to ?

Mr. BERGERON. Some work in the harbour of St. John.

Mr. FISHER. What work ?

Mr. BERGERON. Deepening, I think it was.

Mr. FISHER. I do not know of that.

Mr. BERGERON. I do not know the details but it involved a lot of money.

Mr. C. DEVLIN. Was it during the time of the previous government ?

Mr. BERGERON. No, it was within ten years. I will give the name of the contractor. The contract was given to the highest tenderer.

Mr. FISHER. To whom ?

Mr. BERGERON. To Michael Connolly.

Mr. FISHER. This department never gave any to Mr. Connolly.