

commissioned by our hon. friends opposite to take charge of the criticism of dredging contracts and who speaks for the opposition, to have acquiesced in what I proposed to do, but, as I said, under the circumstances that it was due to myself and to the government and to the friends supporting us to ask for new tenders and then, having called for new tenders, I felt that as the prices were certified to be reasonable by the chief engineer it was my duty to accept the lowest tenders.

Mr. J. D. REID. The minister finds fault with the hon. member for Simcoe (Mr. Bennett) for complaining because tenders were not advertised for in the usual way during the present year and he tries to show that the country has lost money by having to pay larger prices than what were paid last year. If these contractors were willing to do this work at the same prices that they were paid last year, it reflects seriously on the hon. minister that he gave them a renewal of the contract at the advanced prices he has stated.

Mr. PUGSLEY. I did not renew a single contract. I asked for public tenders, and gave the contract to the lowest tenderer.

Mr. J. D. REID. And they are going to be paid \$175,000 more this year than they were paid last year for the same work. I would think that the hon. minister, when he received a tender of 26 cents for work that was done last year for 14 cents per cubic yard, while the contractor was willing to do it this year at the same price, would have hesitated before making a contract at nearly double the price paid before. We learned in the Public Accounts Committee that on all these dredging works the government appointed as inspectors men who had really never had any experience in dredging work.

Mr. PARDEE. All of them?

Mr. J. D. REID. Nearly all of them. I defy the hon. member to name one who had any previous experience of dredging work.

Mr. PARDEE. The man at Penetang said he had been doing it for three years.

Mr. J. D. REID. What was he before he went into the dredging business? One inspector swore that the engineer in charge, I think Mr. Sing from Toronto, only visited the works once or twice during the whole season. This same inspector had charge of two dredges, and he farmed out one part of the work to another man. Any one can see at a glance that in that way the government must necessarily lose. The contractors have everything in their own hands. The chief engineer of the Public Works Department and all of the staff will swear that the only honest way to pay for this work is by scow measurement; and yet these inspectors swear that they cannot come within from ten to thirty yards of the actual

measurement in a scow. On the other hand, the Department of Railways and Canals will tell you that to pay by scow measurement is almost sure to result in a loss to the government, and in their contracts they specify that the work must be measured in situ. The officers of the government swore that the scow measurement made a difference of about one-third.

Mr. PUGSLEY. It was stated that the price given per cubic yard in situ is always different from the price by scow measurement. It is understood that there is an expansion of from 30 to 40 per cent, which is always figured on.

Mr. J. D. REID. There is no doubt there is an expansion. By the scow measurement there is no way of telling whether you get the right quantity or not. The scow may or may not be filled.

Mr. PUGSLEY. The scows are filled.

Mr. J. D. REID. How can the minister say that when the inspectors admitted that they did not see all the scows going out?

Mr. PARDEE. In the great majority of cases they did. All the inspectors swore that.

Mr. PUGSLEY. It is the duty of the inspector to see every scow that goes out, and in the forms that I have prescribed he must swear that he was personally present and saw every scow go out.

Mr. J. D. REID. I admit that that is his duty, but he has not been doing it. I believe the government has not been getting the actual measurement in a single contract by this scow measurement. That is the reason I find fault with this method of paying the contractors. When any dredging is to be done, a profile of the work is made before it is commenced, so that the government know exactly the quantity of stuff to be dredged out when it is in situ; but with the scow measurement, there is no check at all, especially with the kind of inspectors the government have been employing on these works. I claim that on every dredging contract work involving hundreds of thousands of dollars, there should be an engineer. But we have an engineer located in Toronto, and perhaps a tailor or a shoemaker acting as an inspector of the work, and not even keeping track of the number of scows that go out.

Mr. J. T. SCHELL. Will the hon. member tell me what the inspector's duties are on the scow?

Mr. J. D. REID. According to the minister, his duty is to tell the quantity of material in each scow as it goes away from the dredge.

Mr. DUNCAN ROSS. Could not a shoemaker tell whether a scow was full or not?