

the minister admitted to-day that so long as the plans were approved by the admiralty, any concern that had the necessary plant could build the steamer, and that a ship-building firm in Toronto could build it. The minister puts the whole blame on the naval architect, but if I were a minister I would assume the responsibility no matter what the consequences, and would not blame my officials. I never liked the idea of a minister blaming his officials and trying to shield himself. There is no doubt at all that in this case the naval architect made plans for a vessel that would go through the Welland canal, and if I remember aright tenders were advertised about the 18th of February to be received in Ottawa about the 10th of March, and they had to come all the way from England.

How could any Toronto or Collingwood firm tender on a vessel that they could not get through the canals because of that little change? Some one suggested to the naval architect that change in the plans—I am not suggesting that it was the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, because it may have been some one else—and the result was that tenders had to be asked in England. The minister cannot deny that there were several tenders lower by thousands of dollars than that of Vickers-Maxim. This certainly calls for an explanation. The minister was in England, and he could deal directly with these people. I want to tell him that I had it from a representative of one of the largest concerns in England that had sold vessels to the department in Ottawa, that it was absolutely necessary for them to have an agent in Canada, because they had to pay a commission in order to sell a vessel to this government. The minister knows that the agent in Canada of Vickers-Maxim is Lewis, of Lewis Brothers, Montreal, and he said before six o'clock, if I understood him correctly, that Lewis had not had anything whatever to do with this contract, and knew nothing about it. Is that right? If my memory serves me, Lewis telegraphed to the minister to hurry, and have the money sent on. Why was the minister dealing with Lewis if his firm represented Vickers-Maxim? The Minister of Marine and Fisheries, after having been on the gridiron for two or three years, promised us solemnly that in future he would do right and be good. Now he comes with another deal, and it appears to me like this: I want a steamer; my naval architect makes out the plans of what will suit; I have to give out the contract; if I gave it to Polson's or some other Canadian shipbuilder, they would not give us a commission for political purposes; I will make the vessels a foot wider and a foot longer, and it will have to be built in the old country; now, whom can I get to handle this for me? Lewis of Montreal handles the goods for us for elections.

Mr. REID (Grenville).

Lewis is sent for; he goes to England; he handles this contract through Vickers-Maxim, the concern with which Mr. Deguid is connected; and the deal goes through. That is enough to convince me that the thing is not exactly right. I am afraid that if work of this kind continues, we shall have to get the minister up again and give him another lesson, so that he will again promise to be good. The minister says that this government has adopted a policy not to buy a vessel in England so long as they can purchase it in Canada for 20 per cent more than the English price. I can hardly believe that is correct in every department, because I was more than surprised the other day at reading in a newspaper that a vessel only 90 feet long had been bought in England for this government. I thought it was for the Department of Marine, and I was not surprised knowing what I did about the 'Earl Grey' scrape; but when I found that the Minister of Agriculture was the culprit, I concluded that the Minister of Marine and Fisheries must have been giving him some lessons. It does seem strange to me that we cannot give this work to our own Canadian ship-building firms. I have heard some of them say: Give us 20 per cent more than the English price of a vessel, and we will build it every time. But I want to tell the minister wherein he does not treat the Canadian shipbuilders fairly. He calls for tenders for a vessel, and these men come to Ottawa. Then he tells them they will have to have this thing and that thing, and these fittings to fit up the interior in elegant shape, and then they can figure. But he does not tell this to Vickers-Maxim; and when the vessel comes over, you can find in the Auditor General's Report that there is a great deal more added to the cost than there would be if a Canadian firm did the work. It is not necessary to say to the minister that if there is any middleman to carry the funds in Quebec when an election comes on, or if it is necessary to have a rake-off, we cannot trace it in England, it is absolutely safe. We cannot trace it in England, and are willing to hold up our hands in that respect. Therefore it looks to me that there is something else besides cheapness which induced buying in the old country. I do not take any stock in that old story about the willingness of the government to give 20 per cent in advance of what they can buy at in England. The next time the minister wants a steamer built in Canada, let him send the specifications and the lowest tender he gets in England to our ship-building firms in Canada. We have one in Toronto, one at Collingwood, one near Niagara Falls, and one about to start in Port Arthur in a very few weeks, and no doubt there are some in the east, and I would like him