

Under the terms of those affidavits which charged theft and robbery—the latter word was somewhat peculiar—but charged theft, what was the duty of my hon. friend? Those who sit on this side of the House in opposition know what these affidavits stated. The duty of the opposition under those circumstances was to lay those facts before parliament, and when those facts were laid before parliament, parliament ordered an inquiry. It seems to me that the evidence adduced certainly brings to the knowledge of the House a most deplorable state of affairs. It is not a question of whether the sitting member wanted to defraud the government. There was fraud, there was conspiracy on the part of those foremen; undoubtedly they obtained these materials and this labour in an illegal manner. But if he was not a party, by his conduct and his silence, to that fraud, then we come to the interpretation of my hon. friend from Welland (Mr. German) that he made an agreement which he carried out. Could he make that agreement? Had he the right, under the Independence of Parliament Act, to make such an agreement? Let me quote to the House the sections bearing on that point from chapter 10 of the Senate and House of Commons Act:

14. No person, directly or indirectly, alone or with any other, by himself or by the interposition of any trustee or third party, holding or enjoying, undertaking or executing any contract or agreement, expressed or implied, with or for the government of Canada on behalf of the Crown, or with or for any of the officers of the government of Canada, for which any public money of Canada is to be paid, shall be eligible as a member of the House of Commons, or shall sit or vote in the said House.

15. If any member of the House of Commons accepts any office or commission, or is concerned or interested in any contract, agreement, service or work which, by this Act, renders a person incapable of being elected to, or of sitting or voting in the House of Commons, or knowingly sells any goods, wares or merchandise to, or performs any service for the government of Canada, or for any of the officers of the government of Canada, for which any public money of Canada is paid or to be paid, whether such contract, agreement or sale is expressed or implied, and whether the transaction is single or continuous, the seat of such member shall thereby be vacated, and his election shall thenceforth be null and void.

To my mind it seems beyond doubt that, even accepting the interpretation of the hon. member for Welland (Mr. German), the sitting member for Richelieu made an agreement with the government as to the completion of his house for which public money of Canada was to be expended and was expended. These are the words of the statute. To leave that out, what are we

asked to do by the motion of my hon. friend? To declare that the whole transaction was regular as far as the sitting member was concerned, is to be countenanced and is to be commended. Is there not, beyond the words of this statute, a tendency by cases of this kind, to weaken and impair the independence of parliament? When I heard doubt expressed as to the applicability of these sections of the Act I stated that I had an open mind, but no doubt whatever on the second point, that if parliament sanctions such proceedings as these, we are undoing the work of centuries in establishing the independence of parliament, we place a member in absolute dependence. He, by getting work done by a department of the government, places himself in a position of absolute control and subserviency to this department. He loses, in other words, his independence, there is no doubt whatever about that. It seems to me that very far from commending and approving this conduct, we should, at any rate, in adopting this report, point out that this conduct is fraught with extreme danger and is a menace to the independence of parliament.

I have referred to Mr. Papineau. I say, on my responsibility as a member of this House, it is not necessary to produce affidavits of that, that the condition of affairs in Sorel is an eyesore in our province, it is a public scandal, it is notorious. How is that with such a director? Can the question be asked? In the first place he has been there for only a limited time, but what do we now see? We see these four men come up boldly and tell us the system under which they had been able to execute these works. A man employing men who had his confidence under these circumstances would not hesitate for a moment, he would dismiss them. They have forfeited the trust, they have betrayed the confidence placed in them and so they were justifying themselves before the director of the works and in the presence of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries. It is his own incompetency that is at fault. They should not have been allowed to leave the committee room if my hon. friend had time to satisfy himself on that point without his satisfying himself then and there, and dismissing them. Are we going to be told that with that state of affairs enduring for years, it would be impossible for a competent minister, acting for the people, supported by this House, to put a stop to that state of affairs within ten days? I say on the same responsibility that there should be a general inquiry. What is there to fear? If I am right in saying that this is a matter of public notoriety, the minister should have an inquiry, the government should grant one, and if there is an inquiry hon.