

lic Accounts Committee—it is true that it appeared that Mr. Murray had bought the wharf property for \$700 from Mr. O'Leary, and that the government, having in view the possibility that it might be required, had the chief engineer make an examination of the property. Mr. Murray gave to the engineer an option on the property. But the government did not determine to buy it for several months after that, and not until it was twice reported on, and not until the chief engineer of my department and myself were perfectly satisfied that the property was a good bargain at \$5,000. I do not hesitate to say here to-night, and I do not hesitate to say anywhere, that the government got a good bargain for the sum of \$5,000. And I want to repeat a remark I made before the recess, that it is an extraordinary thing that, although the hon. gentleman had all the witnesses here from Richibucto, although he had here one of the most prominent citizens of Richibucto, he did not venture to produce a single witness to testify to the value of the property except Mr. Richard O'Leary, although witness after witness was produced to testify that the property was well worth \$5,000, one witness put in the value as high as \$10,000. It is a fact which, I think, ought to have great weight with this committee that the hon. gentleman was not able to produce a single witness from the town of Richibucto, with a population of about 1,000, except Mr. O'Leary, who would question the value of the property, and who was prepared to say that it was worth one dollar less than \$5,000. So far as that property is concerned, I have no hesitation in defending anywhere the purchase which was made by the government. That, however, is beside the question.

The hon. gentleman has asked me to give an assurance to-night that Mr. Thomas Murray will not be appointed foreman of this work. The hon. gentleman has chosen to make a statement as to what took place before the Public Accounts Committee, he has made a charge based, as he says, upon evidence before that committee, that Murray has been guilty of a fraud and a criminal act against the government. Sir, I have learned during the course of my public career, not to judge people until the tribunal which is called upon to try them has made its report, and I decline to-night, until that committee has reported the evidence, until I have had an opportunity of examining it, and until this committee has had an opportunity of examining it, I decline to express any opinion as to the conduct of Mr. Murray, who was the foreman of the work. I have not made any appointment of a foreman, I have not decided to make Mr. Murray foreman of the work for the coming year. When I do so, if I act improperly, my conduct will be open to question by the hon. gentleman, as well as

by other hon. gentlemen. Now then, my hon. friend states that Mr. Murray fraudulently put in bills for \$12 per thousand for lumber which only cost \$7. I do not know what is the evidence before the committee; I was not present at all the meetings of the committee, though I was at one or two of them, so I did not hear all the evidence. But I have been informed that the average cost of the lumber was \$12 per thousand, that some of it was bought at the lower price of \$7, some of it cost \$15, but it was all put in at the average price of \$12 per thousand, which would be the average cost of the total quantity of lumber. I do not know whether that statement is true or not, and I am not prepared to discuss it until the committee makes its report and has been discharged from the performance of its duty in connection with that matter. As I have already said, I have come to no conclusion to appoint Mr. Murray. The matter has not been up for consideration. All I am asking now is a vote for the continuance of the work. When the time comes to appoint a foreman, I can assure my hon. friend that no one will be appointed against whom there can be a shadow of suspicion, so far as integrity is concerned.

Mr. BARKER. I do not intend to go into the question of the other work as to which Mr. Murray was charged with impropriety as an officer of this government; I propose to confine my remarks to the item before the House. I understand that the person alluded to has been doing certain work in connection with the item now before the House, and an hon. member of this House says that that person an officer of the government has been cheating this country in connection with that work, has been deliberately and wilfully defrauding the government by charging up an article as costing \$12 when he only paid \$7. That is the point. We are asked to give the hon. minister further money to go on with that work, and he is asked whether he is going to continue as foreman this man who is under that charge. He says, I will consider that matter at the proper time. Now I do not mean to say that because an hon. member of this House has made so grave a charge, upon his responsibility as a member, as that an employee of the minister has been robbing this country, that necessarily that charge should justify us in withholding the money from the minister; but I do say that it is a proper question for the members of this House to consider, to discuss, and it is proper to drag, if necessary, from the minister a clear, business-like answer. The minister knows that that charge has been made, I think he has known it, certainly he knows it now. I ask him now if, in the interest of this country, he thinks it right to continue that man in