

Public Works Act

patronage. We all know that is an excessively costly way of doing business. Only in the case of an emergency should any contract be let by the Department of Public Works without calling for tenders. We know that if tenders are called and properly handled the public can make a bid to do work, and when they make a bid the department gets the work done better and at a lower cost to the taxpayers of the country. But if we start in and let these contracts, with the officials of the department to judge whether or not they should be let, then it is purely political patronage, and I do not think the bill should pass this house at this time, even if it is the closing of the session, without there being a little more control instead of a reversion to political patronage in the letting of contracts, just as was done in reference to the matter I spoke about a moment ago, namely contracts for rural mail delivery.

Mr. Herridge: Before this amendment passes I want to say that we in this group are very pleased that the minister has recognized the soundness of the arguments of the opposition with respect to the necessity for a limitation in this section. I think the amount suggested, namely \$15,000, is very reasonable. Anyone having a knowledge of construction at all will agree with that. I might say, Mr. Chairman, that I have been fairly closely associated with construction projects throughout the years. While I can recognize the dangers of patronage, and I am opposed to patronage, I know the great difficulties that district engineers have in proceeding with work under present conditions. I am in favour of a considerable amount of flexibility and placing in the hands of the district engineers more power than they have today to make immediate decisions. I know that important work has been delayed because the engineers have had to refer to Ottawa and could not make a decision on the ground to buy certain materials, or to get certain work done, because the man who was willing to do it at a certain price could not do it at a later date, and so on. I think that has to be considered when we are dealing with public works tenders and public works projects. We in this group are very pleased to see this amendment; we think it is most satisfactory.

Amendment agreed to.

Section as amended agreed to.

Section 2 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.

[Mr. McLure.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Mr. Speaker, may I suggest that we have time to take up this little Bill No. 15, which concerns privileges and immunities in respect of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I understand that the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Pearson) has consulted with members of the opposition, who seem to have no serious objection to bringing it on at the present time. If it were to bring about a long debate we would have to withdraw it to come back to NATO. It has been before a committee of the house, and it is now to go to the committee of the whole. Second reading has been given to the bill and it has been reported back from the committee on external affairs. If I can have the agreement of the house we will proceed with the item.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

MEASURE TO APPROVE AGREEMENT ON STATUS OF ORGANIZATION, NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND INTERNATIONAL STAFF

Hon. L. B. Pearson (Secretary of State for External Affairs) moved that the house go into committee to consider Bill No. 15, to provide for privileges and immunities in respect of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Motion agreed to, and the house went into committee, Mr. Dion in the chair.

On section 1—*Short title.*

Mr. Graydon: I have only one question to ask; I asked a number of them in the committee. The minister was away when the committee sat and did not have an opportunity to answer this question. It has to do with the NATO organization itself. In connection with decisions made by the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in council, does there have to be unanimity before a decision is arrived at and a judgment given?

Mr. Pearson: Yes, that is so. No decision has been taken, or indeed I suppose no decision could be taken, in the North Atlantic council which was not concurred in by all of its members.

Mr. Graydon: I have raised the question because some people took umbrage at my saying there was a veto in NATO. Apparently that is really what it amounts to.

Section agreed to.

Section 2 agreed to.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.