

permission, I trust I may be allowed to say a few words. I think that my hon. friend (Mr. Reid) supposed that we are now dealing with the appropriation of the coming year which of course has not yet been reached, although I stated that it had been the intention of the late minister to proceed with this work during the coming year, and that an appropriation for that purpose is being asked for in the estimates. That, however, is not the particular item that is now before us. If the House at a later day should grant the sum which is in the main estimates, of course the Minister of Railways and Canals, whoever he may be, will have to consider all that has been said on the subject, and judge for himself whether or not he will deal with this work in the manner in which it has been dealt with in the past. The vote we are asking for now is entirely for the payment of past work, and although, as I have indicated, the minister had it in his mind to proceed with it, it does not necessarily follow that he is bound to spend the \$75,000 asked for in the main estimates.

Mr. SPROULE. Did you go on with the work last year?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Not last year. This is to pay for work that was done in a previous year, which was the subject of discussion last session, but for which no appropriation was taken. My hon. friend from Grenville has read a number of letters, most of them very venerable, from away back in the year 1888, which after all only prove that doctors differ. He has read letters from a number of people in the transportation business who do not think the channel is necessary. We could also produce letters from people in the transportation business who say that the channel is very necessary, and who are anxious that the government should continue it. That is a matter on which there is a difference of opinion. The hon. gentleman seems to be very much in the position of the jurymen who said that he had never met with eleven such stupid jurymen in his life, because they would not agree with him. It is the hon. gentleman's misfortune to differ with all the engineers. That work was commenced by Mr. Page, for many years the chief engineer of canals; it was continued by Mr. Trudeau, his successor, and by Mr. Rubidge, than whom no man understands the St. Lawrence better. He has lived almost half a century on that river, and we ought to yield very much to his judgment. The hon. gentleman has appealed to the present deputy minister and chief engineer. All I can say is that the work is continued with the hearty concurrence of the deputy minister and chief engineer on the ground that whatever may have been the opinions with regard to it in the past, after so large a sum of money has been spent on the work, it is a wise course to proceed with it and finish it. My hon. friend

Hon. Mr. FIELDING.

read the report of Mr. John Kennedy, a very estimable engineer connected with the Montreal harbour board; but all he said was not that the work was not very useful, but that it had not been completed. I think I am justified in saying that the work was suspended for a time under the impression that it was completed, but when it was found that it was not, further estimates were asked for, and we ask the present estimate in the light I have stated, that although there have been differences of opinion among the transportation people, and possibly among the people of the community, on the subject, it is the fact that many engineers who had the confidence of the government and who were high in their profession, recommended this work, and it has been carried on for years with the hearty concurrence of Mr. Rubidge. As to the charges, it is only fair to say, that these cover more than the mere dredge, and include a variety of other plant. I must confess that my own knowledge of dredging plant is not enough to enable me to say whether it is a fair sum or not; but the minister who made the contract considered it a fair sum, and was advised that it was fair by Mr. Rubidge. However, in view of the immense sum of money, approaching \$1,000,000, spent on that work, we think it is the part of wisdom to go on and spend the small sum necessary to finish it and make it available for the transportation of the country.

Hon. Mr. HAGGART. Has the plan been changed any?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Yes, for the purpose of widening the channel from 200 to 300 feet.

Hon. Mr. HAGGART. When was that plan changed?

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. Whatever work was done in recent years was done under that plan of 300 feet in width.

Mr. REID (Grenville). I understood that last year those parties went there with their plant, without any instructions whatever from the government, and, if so, they were there at their own risk. Then, I suppose the hon. minister is aware that this whole channel, where he is spending all his money, is on the American side of the river. It does seem strange to me that, if we are to depend on making a channel there, it should be done by the American government.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE. I am advised that this work is not on the American side. Some of the dam is on the American side, but this work is not.

Mr. REID (Grenville). I will tell the minister what gives me the impression that it is. The minister is, of course, aware that there is a duty on American coal coming into this country, and when this firm started