

of supplies and for the cutting out of the right of way. There is a good deal of work that can be done very easily and conveniently in winter that cannot be done in summer. I contend that by the suspension of work under this contract the Minister of Railways has practically held up that work for one solid year, and I think the people of western Canada are also quite convinced of that.

That may seem a light matter to my hon. friend the Minister of Railways, but if he were able to place himself in the position of the western farmer and, as in this year, find it impossible to get a car to his station for his damaged wheat and at the same time know that the government are holding up work on an undertaking that would afford another outlet for his wheat to the markets of the world, my hon. friend (Mr. Cochrane) would not sit with such complacency and make such orders.

There is another important feature of the question. There is no doubt that the contractors will have a very serious claim against the government of Canada as the result of the order of the Minister of Railways (Mr. Cochrane) holding up the work. I do not think there can be any question about that. Of course the Minister of Railways does not have to pay it; the country has to pay it.

But that, Sir, is the least important feature of this order holding up the work on this contract. Why was it done? That is the question that we have been waiting to hear answered. I think this parliament and this country ought to have been given some information on the point when such an order was given. Is there anything to show that the chief engineer employed by the late government made a mistake in laying out the route? I notice that in the speech from the Throne reference is made to the fact that the government propose to investigate the matter and ascertain the best route to Hudson Bay. Did the chief engineer charged with the work under the late government make a mistake in laying out the route? Why does not the Minister of Railways let the country know that this was the reason—if that was the reason why the work was held up on this contract? And if the chief engineer under the late government made a mistake in laying out the route has the chief engineer been discharged from the employ of the new government? As I understand it, there can be no question—there is no question—that the route of the first two hundred miles would be the same (that is, if the starting point were the same, Le Pas Mission, on the Saskatchewan river) no matter whether the terminus was Port Nelson or Fort Churchill. So, I cannot see that there is anything wrong with the location of the route, for this contract covered something

less than the first two hundred miles. Was the lowest tender not accepted in the letting of this contract? If the lowest tender was not accepted, then it is the duty of this House to ask for a commission of inquiry, to inquire into the matter. And I do not think the Minister of Railways ought to take the responsibility upon his own shoulders of punishing the late government for not having accepted the lowest tender. But my information is that the lowest tender was accepted and that the contract was awarded to a firm or a company that had done a great deal of this work before, and from that standpoint were absolutely reliable. In this connection, I might say that since the recent elections, we have been reading a great deal in the press throughout the country that one of the chief responsibilities of the new government will be to make a thorough investigation into all the departments of the late administration, in order to find out what abuses existed in these departments, and to correct them. Well, I think I have the right and the authority—I will assume it—to say for the benefit of these newspapers who have been making these statements and of hon. gentlemen on the government side who may have been making them, that, so far as the allotting of public works by the different departments of the late government is concerned, if there is one thing the members of the late administration will heartily welcome it is a thorough investigation by their successors in office into every department.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

An hon. MEMBER. Not very loud.

Mr. NEELY. I understand an hon. member to say I am speaking too loud, I am speaking sincerely, and I wish to make myself heard. I resent these insinuations of the Tory newspapers, and of hon. gentlemen opposite, of finding wrongdoing before hand; and I say we take up the challenge they offer us and ask them to go ahead with all the investigations they please. And I feel safe in saying that no department of the government can stand a more thorough investigation than that of Railways and Canals as administered by the late minister, the Hon. Geo. P. Graham.

So far, I have not found anything that would look like a reason why this work was suspended. Of course, the present holder of the office of Railways and Canals (Mr. Cochrane), is new to his position. We can quite understand that he had to learn what his new duties would be. But surely, Sir, it was not necessary to hold up a great national undertaking while he was learning his lesson. Perhaps the Minister of Railways, when he came to his new office was possessed of the good Tory conviction that because these contracts were let by a