

supplies in the hands of the Government very material? What does the minister say with reference to this statement that there is evidence of amateurishness in the purchase of supplies?

Mr. ROWELL: What is the name of my hon. friend's informant?

Mr. McKENZIE: It has not been customary, for some months at all events, to give names.

Mr. ROWELL: It is so far away from the facts, as I understand them, that I should be glad to follow it up if I had the name.

Mr. McKENZIE: I would gladly give the letter to my hon. friend only it is marked "Confidential" in red ink.

Mr. ROWELL: I am afraid my hon. friend should not have read it.

Mr. McKENZIE: I know I could not do that in court, but the practice has been established here of reading a letter without giving the name of the writer.

Mr. ROWELL: Substantial supplies were purchased for the Department of Militia and Defence having regard to the war continuing for a longer period, but the supplies were purchased at the current market prices—at the best prices that could be secured at the time the purchases were made. When my hon. friend's correspondent speaks of supplies having been purchased by "amateurs," he evidently had not heard what the hon. member for Maisonneuve had to say about the chairman of that commission.

Mr. McKENZIE: But he was not doing the buying.

Mr. ROWELL: The chairman of the commission and his associates have devoted their personal attention to all these matters, and there is not a more careful business man that I know of anywhere than the chairman of that commission, Sir Hormisdas Laporte. I never met him until I came in contact with him in connection with the work of the commission, but I have formed the highest opinion of his efficiency as well as integrity in dealing with these matters. I can assure my hon. friend that so far as the purchase of supplies is concerned the work has been thoroughly done. The actual work, of course, was done by the officers of the department.

Mr. McKENZIE: In view of the marvellous capacity of these men, what does

the minister say about the investigation we had into the purchase of horses in Annapolis county, where hundreds of thousands of dollars were thrown away, or about the purchase of boots and shoes and clothing which turned out to be absolutely worthless? Where does the wonderful efficiency of the commission come in?

Mr. ROWELL: My hon. friend's question illustrates the value of the commission. These purchases were made before the commission was appointed, and no better proof of the efficiency of the commission could be found than that since their appointment all these criticisms have disappeared.

Section agreed to.

On section 12—requisition necessary:

Mr. COPP: Under subsection (2) of this section have the commissioners authority to refuse to fill a requisition?

Mr. ROWELL: No. If they think a department is requisitioning for supplies it does not need, their duty, instead of undertaking to cut the requisition down, is to draw it to the attention of the Prime Minister for submission to Council. That preserves governmental responsibility. The Government must then take the responsibility of saying whether the quantity requisitioned shall be purchased or not.

Mr. COPP: Under what clause has the Governor in Council that authority?

Mr. ROWELL: The Prime Minister would take it up with the minister of the department concerned.

Mr. COPP: Under what section of this Act has he that authority? The commission have authority to purchase supplies, and this section says that they have no authority to change the requisition, but that they can do certain things. Suppose my hon. friend, desiring to keep up the style of his office, wanted mahogany furniture or a mahogany waste paper basket in his office, and requisitioned accordingly, I understand the commission would have no authority to change that requisition. If that is so, must they supply the goods?

Mr. ROWELL: They are not bound to supply them. They cannot change the requisition, but they can report direct to the Prime Minister.

Mr. COPP: What action can he take?

Mr. ROWELL: He has all the power that the Prime Minister has. It puts the respon-