

ment, that their word was to be taken, in the granting of favours, or the dismissal of officials when they desire to do so. When this question was brought under the notice of the Commons, the Minister of Public Works gave an explanation which I shall read to the House for the purpose of establishing this point, that he knew that Mr. Petit was the man who wrote the letter, and the grounds upon which he did write it.

I have seen the letter in the journal mentioned. I had received two tenders for the supply of coal to the public building at St. Jérôme. The prices were equal. If there had been a difference, the lower tender would have been accepted as a matter of course. But as they were equal I was free to accept either. In such cases the practice of the department for many years has been to ask the opinion of the friends of the government as to which tender should be accepted. Following this practice, the secretary of my department sent the following letter to Mr. Petit, who had been the Liberal candidate at the last election :

Department of Public Works, Ottawa, August 28th, '96.

'Sir,—In answer to a notice asking tenders for the supply of coal for the public buildings of the Dominion, *two tenders have been received* for the supply of coal necessary for the public buildings of St. Jérôme, viz. Messrs. Evans Brothers and Labrecque, Cousineau & Co. The price demanded by those tenderers being equal, I am instructed to ask you to kindly tell me to whom *you* would like the contract for the supply of coal to be granted. I have the honour to be, (signed) E. F. E. Roy, secretary.'

Upon the receipt of that letter Mr. Petit writes to the two tenderers this famous letter, which has already become historic, asking them what they would do for him, as "business is business," or, in other words, he asks which of the two gentlemen will give him the largest amount of money, and to him will the contract be awarded, because the Minister of Public Works has stated that "upon my recommendation you shall have the contract." It is that kind of action that I desire to have stopped, and I think my hon. friend would also desire to see it stopped. For that reason, I have called the attention of the Minister of Justice to the letter. I know that the Minister of Public Works refers to the practice of the department. Such may have been the practice, for all I know. I have had little, during my long experience in the government, to do with the letting of contracts. In the Customs nothing of that kind occurred, because the supply of fuel, which was formerly purchased by the Cus-

tom Department, was relegated to the Board of Works, for the reason that I thought—and I think everyone should come to the same conclusion—that in asking for tenders for coal for the whole of the departments of the Dominion, outside and inside service, it could be obtained at a cheaper rate than for each department to advertise for and receive tenders separately. I had some little experience, however, when I was President of the Council, and consequently had control of the Mounted Police. In that position we had to advertise for Mounted Police clothing and for the supply of other articles. My practice in that case was to take the 'lowest tender, without inquiring as to the politics of the man who had sent it in : and, as an evidence of that, one of the leading Liberals in the city of Kingston received the contract—that is the time when I was Minister of Militia—for the supply of fuel and coal for the barracks and the military school in Kingston. In advertising for tenders for the Mounted Police—the food, tea and other things which we had to purchase—it was always done by tender ; and, as evidence of the fairness with which these tenders were considered, the quality of the article was tested by experts, and the lowest tender accepted in all cases. In the article of tea, to which I have referred, there were tenders from Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Winnipeg, at the same price precisely. After the examination of samples of tea from these different places, they were found to be of equal quality. Upon that occasion, I gave an order to each of these gentlemen ; and to show that I was not biassed, and that the government who sustained my action was not biassed by political considerations altogether, one lot of 1000 lbs. was given to the firm of Bate & Co. of this city. Every one knows that that firm is one of the grittiest of the grits. They are a most respectable firm, and a reliable firm, and their business transactions are fair and honourable, so far as I know, and they got a share of the contract. I wish it distinctly understood that I do not find fault with the government for awarding a contract to their friends, providing the tender is honestly given, and that the prices are the same, and the articles to be received are equal to those which would be supplied by others. No matter whether it has been the practice in the past or not, it becomes the duty of the