

into this matter carefully they will find that in the United States the work in harbour improvements is done much cheaper than it is done in Canada by government labour. Now, I think that our whole system of letting work by contract in this country is wrong, our system of tender is wrong. It could all be changed with great advantage. But when the hon. gentleman says that the government can do this dredging work for from three to five cents a yard, while the contractors get from twenty-three and twenty-five to fifty cents a yard for the same class of work, I differ with him, because he is entirely mistaken. He says that the work which that large dredge, the 'J. Israel Tarte,' is doing, is being done for three or four cents a yard. I doubt its being done at that figure, and I venture to say that any firm of contractors would take that work and do it cheaper than the government is doing it. Dredging work is being done on the Welland canal to-day for less than one-half of fifty cents a yard, and it is a very expensive class of work. It is being done for twenty-three cents a yard. But that is just taking two feet off the bottom of the canal, a skimming process, which is exceedingly expensive. But when contractors get into a class of dredging where they can get, in contractors' parlance, a face for the dredge to work on, ten cents a yard is not a high figure, with any kind of a good dredge. Eight, ten or twelve cents a yard is a good figure, and even less in a certain class of work. I still assert that the government would do well to consider carefully whether they should not go out of the dredging business and get their work done under a different system altogether. Then we would get rid of having every year \$30,000 to \$50,000 to quarrel over in this parliament for repairs to these old dredges; because they will all be old shortly, and it costs an enormous amount of money to keep dredging plant in repair. Every winter contractors have to spend a considerable amount of money in repairs to their plant. It is a difficult plant to keep in repair, and parliament will have to spend a great deal of money year after year for the repair of their dredges. Dredges are continually getting old, and as they get old it costs more to keep them in repair. I say again that I believe it would be well for the government to consider whether they should not do away with the whole system of doing this class of work by government dredges.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. When I spoke of that figure of three or four cents a yard, I did not refer to the dredge which, unfortunately it seems, bears my name. That dredge, I believe, will do work for less than one cent a yard, but the elevator dredges that are doing work on the St. Lawrence cost three, or four, or five cents a yard. There is no contractor in this country to-day who

Mr. GERMAN.

has dredges that can do work for the same price. I know what dredges are available, I know the kind of work which is being done on the Welland canal. If one of our dredges was there, it would not cost twenty-three cents a yard. The contractor who has that work must make large profits indeed. I know what dredging costs, I have inquired into it carefully, and I say without hesitation that the dredging work carried out by the Department of Public Works costs a great deal less than any dredging done by any other department here. Let us compare notes at the next meeting of the Public Accounts Committee. I make bold to say that the dredging done by the Department of Public Works under the control of the head of that department, though it may cost three, or four, or five cents a yard; you will find by comparison that it will cost twenty to twenty-five cents a yard, the same kind of work, when done under the system my hon. friend advocates. The contractors are realizing large profits indeed out of this business. Let the House understand me well, it is the best business that the contractors have on hand. I know what I am saying, I have gone carefully into the figures. I know that the contractors are all anxious to see the Public Works Department dispense with their dredging plant. There is no jobbing, and no profit to be made out of a government dredge that is being worked by the department. The contractors are perfectly right in desiring to get the contracts. They are not in the business for love. But I strongly protest against the idea of dismantling those splendid modern dredges that have been built during the last five or six years, dredges that will do work three or four times cheaper than any contractor has done so far.

Mr. SPROULE. It has not been the experience in our part of the country at least that contractors will do dredging cheaper than the government. For many years we have made it a point, when an item is put in the estimates for dredging harbours in our part of the country, to endeavour to get government dredges, because government dredges will do twice as much work for the same money as contractors will, and do it much more satisfactorily. No contractor will pretend to dredge for less than eight or ten cents a yard, and it is a fact that the government dredges have taken it out time after time for five cents a yard. Then there is this in favour of a government dredge: When a government dredge is put into a harbour it will take out the material whether it is hard or soft. When a contractor does the dredging and is paid so much a yard, the dredge goes into a locality where the material is soft, and he will take it away down very much deeper than is necessary, because he is paid for it by the yard and he is getting out