

ing of one season when they were prepared to resume their work, they are told that their services are not required. If that is not dismissal, I do not know what it is. I think the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Dymont) is exercising an authority that it would be well, in so young a man, not to exercise. He is just commencing his political career; he is just building a reputation for himself which will not be to his credit. He complains that I did not give the number of those appointed. I say that I had not an opportunity of seeing that list. Information is retained until the very moment it is required for the discussion of items before us, and then it is thrown at us. I say that it is unfair to the members of the House that they should not have an opportunity to get the information that is necessary in order to defend their friends who are unjustly assailed and dismissed without inquiry. The leader of the Government (Sir Wilfred Laurier) stated in my hearing that no man in the public service would be dismissed without having a fair chance to defend himself against any charge brought against them.

Mr. LISTER. They were not dismissed.

Mr. SPROULE. I say they were dismissed. There is no other word in the English language that will describe the treatment they received. They were dismissed without trial.

Mr. DYMENT. I would like to ask the hon. gentleman a question. If the tables were turned, and his side was in power, would he recommend the re-appointment of these men?

Mr. SPROULE. Certainly I would.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. SPROULE. Hon. members laugh. They are laughing in a sneering way that is not becoming. I have been in this House for nineteen years, and when pressure was put upon me—now I am giving a personal history—to dismiss some of the postmasters one of whom hounded me throughout the riding and abused me on the platform, I never asked for his dismissal. I went to Sir John Macdonald and asked him what was the custom, and he said that so long as a man did his duty as an officer it was unusual to ask for his dismissal. And he remained 12 or 14 years longer in that office until he resigned it voluntarily. I refer to Mr. Middleton, of Dundalk. The hon. member for South Grey (Mr. Landarkin) knows him. I can give two or three instances of the same kind; but in no case did I ever ask for the dismissal of a man in my riding for political partisanship or any other reason, so long as he did his work faithfully.

To pay Contractor Archibald Stewart for loss caused by stoppage of work on sections 1 and 2 of the Soulanges Canal.... \$17,345

Mr. SPROULE.

The MINISTER OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS. I wish to add the following words to that item:—"Notwithstanding that the said amount is not legally recoverable by the contractor under the strict legal interpretation of the contract." Now, with regard to this item, I may say that it is the sum which it has been concluded that Mr. Stewart is entitled to by reason of actual loss caused him by stoppage of the work upon sections one and two of his contract on the Soulanges Canal. A very strong opinion was given by the engineer in charge of that work, that the stone which was being supplied by the contractor was unfit for use on the canal, and did not properly comply with the specifications of the contract. This occurred before I entered upon the duties of the department, and, upon the opinion of the engineer being received by the gentleman who was acting as Minister of Railways at the time, instructions were given to stop the work. It was felt that, if the opinion of the engineer was correct and this stone was unsuitable, it ought not to be allowed to be put into the work any longer; and it was thought proper to have an immediate investigation into the whole matter. Opinion, I believe, was invited. Experts were sent down for the purpose of examining the stone. Some of them reported favourably, and some condemned the stone. Other experts were sent, a good deal of delay occurred, and a great difference of opinion was found to exist among those who were supposed to be competent to form a judgment upon a question of that kind; and it became a very serious question as to what ought to be done. It would, of course, be a most disastrous thing if stone which was unfit for that work, should be allowed to be put into it. Naturally, a good deal of delay occurred in reaching a conclusion as to whether the engineer in charge of the works was right, or the chief engineer of the department, who pronounced in favour of the stone. Ultimately it was determined that the engineer in charge of the work was not justified in condemning the whole stone. Some of the stone, it was decided, was unsuitable for the work, and some of it was suitable. The quarry itself did contain, it was decided, proper stone for use, while, of course, it contained a good deal that would not answer the purpose. The decision arrived at, therefore, was, that the general condemnation which had been pronounced by the engineer in charge, was too broad, and that the work ought not to be stopped, that a portion of the stone which he had got out could very properly be put into the work, and the ultimate decision was in accordance with that view. Before the final conclusion had been reached and the contractor was notified, he had been delayed a long period. I think some three months elapsed before the matter was ultimately decided. His machinery was kept idle, and a number of his