

clear that under the terms of the contracts, I had power, if I thought it in the public interest so to do, to fix a later date for the completion of the work. I asked for a report from the chief engineer of my department with reference to the prices which were being paid for the various dredging work that was being done under the different contracts. His report was that in all cases the prices were fair and reasonable. In many cases they seemed to me very low, and I am free to say to the committee that I thought that it would unquestionably be in the public interest if I could extend those contracts and give until the end of the present year for their completion, where that time was necessary in order to complete them. But the hon. gentleman voicing the sentiments of the opposition raised an objection to that. Well, I felt that the views of the opposition were entitled to respect. They represent a large and important section of the people of this country, although numerically a considerable minority of the people. Still, they represent an important section, and their opinions are entitled to respect. I felt that if there could be any ground of criticism levelled against me and levelled against those with whom I have the honour to be associated, not only my colleagues in the government but our supporters in this House and throughout this country—I felt that I ought not to subject them to that criticism. So in looking into the matter more closely, I found that the advertisements for tenders which were issued last year called for dredging during the then present season. My hon. friend had not called the attention of the committee, and had not called my attention to that. But in consequence of the matter coming up, and as I felt that if there were any ground of criticism it was my duty to remove it, I looked back to see what were the advertisements which called for tenders on which these contracts had been let, and finding that the advertisements were limited in the way I have mentioned, I came to the conclusion that, even although the contracts upon their face gave me power to fix a later date for the completion of the work, yet upon the whole there might be a question as to whether the contracts were not broader than was warranted by the advertisements. In view, therefore, of the objection which was raised by the opposition, and in view of the criticism which I knew would be levelled against me and against the government if I were to extend the contracts, I thought it would be better for me to yield to the objection which had been raised, and to issue an advertisement for new tenders. I did so, Mr. Chairman, and I did so reluctantly, because I felt that the extension of the contracts would be in the public interest. I felt it would be a saving of money to the country to extend the contracts. However, as I say, I yielded to the

objection which had been made, and in view of the circumstances regarding the advertisements for tenders. Well, the result of calling for new tenders has been that in the great majority of cases, although the widest possible publicity was given to the advertisements, and although in many cases a large number of tenders were received, the total result has been that the price at which the lowest tenderer in each case tendered, is, with few exceptions, considerably higher than the price at which the work was being done last year. I will give some examples. In the case of Owen Sound, the contract was being done last year for materials, outside of rock, at 20 cents per cubic yard; the lowest tender this year was 25 cents per cubic yard.

Mr. BENNETT. Who is the tenderer ?

Mr. PUGSEY. Mr. Bowman. And Mr. Boone also tendered. Mr. Boone's tender was 28 cents per cubic yard, 8 cents higher than the price given last year. The lowest tenderer this year was 5 cents per cubic yard higher than the price last year. In the case of the Hamilton work it was done last year at 12 cents per cubic yard, the lowest tender this year is 15 cents.

Mr. BENNETT. Who is the tenderer?

Mr. PUGSLEY. Mr. Phinn. Mr. Healey, the next tenderer, 23 cents. At Cobourg there were five tenderers: Phinn at 18 cents, Morgan at 22 cents, Healy at 23, Randolph & Macdonald at 23, and Manley at 30. Last year the work was being done at the low price of 11 cents per cubic yard, 7 cents per cubic yard lower than the lowest tender of this year, and 19 cents per cubic yard lower than the highest tender of this year. In that case there were five tenderers for the work. In the case of Goderich there were three tenderers: Horton at 35 cents, Manley & Co. at 35 cents, and J. B. Bertram, of Toronto, at 42 cents. Mr. Bertram is a dredging contractor. He is doing work at Port Burwell at present. The price of the work last year, 25 cents per cubic yard, was one cent per cubic yard less than the lowest tender this year and 17 cents lower than the highest of this year. In the case of Midland this year there was only one tender at 28 cents, while last year it was 26 cents, a difference of 2 cents. The Canadian Dredging and Construction Company has the contract. At Little Current the price this year is a little less than last year. Last year it was 30 cents and this year it is 25 cents. The same contractor, Mr. Boone, has the work.

Mr. BENNETT. How many tenders were there at Little Current?

Mr. PUGSLEY. Two.

Mr. BENNETT. Who was the second ?

Mr. PUGSLEY. Mr. Bowman. At Wingfield basin, Boone tendered last year and