

his having certain knowledge which would fit him for the work, but I refused to give the permission. I think it is better that the clerks should confine themselves strictly to the work of the department.

Mr. BLAIN. I would think that such an application would indicate to the minister that something of that kind had gone on in the past.

Mr. PUGSLEY. No, I am not at all prepared to say that. The application came from one who I would suppose had not any particular bias; but I thought it well to adopt the policy, which I have no reason to suppose was not the policy in the past that the officials should adhere as strictly as possible to the work of the department and not take part in election matters.

Mr. BENNETT. I find at page V—327 that a gentleman named Mr. Vautelet has made a very large claim on the department. It would seem that this gentleman had been engaged to prepare certain plans for what is known as the St. Andrew's dam. Is that the dam below Winnipeg?

Mr. PUGSLEY. Yes.

Mr. BENNETT. It seems extraordinary that a department manned as this department is, with skilful and experienced engineers and draftsmen, should have to go outside and employ a gentleman for \$15,000 to prepare these plans. I think it will rather astonish the people of the country to learn that when a work of this nature, not of any extraordinary technical difficulty, is to be undertaken, the Department of Public Works has to confess its inability to supply a competent man for that work—either that or the work of the department is so pressing that no person can be spared to take it up. The hon. gentleman has assumed the control of a department that has not given much satisfaction to the people of this country during the last ten years, for almost every session the answer to every query is: 'I knew nothing about it, I had nothing to do with it, I was not the minister, some one else had it in charge.' This is a claim of such striking size that I would ask the minister if he could give the House an explanation—first, under what minister this engagement was made, why the sum of \$15,000 has not been paid over, and why it is that of this large amount \$5,000 has been paid, and Mr. Lafleur, the engineer of the department, recommends the payment of \$5,000 further, and does not recommend the payment of the bill in its entirety. The last letter of the Auditor General's Department says this, over the signature of Frederick Hayter, for the Auditor General:

There should, I think, be an order in council for an arrangement of this magnitude. If one has already been obtained, please have a copy furnished to this office.

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In making a large payment outside of the department for services similar to those generally performed by the departmental officials, it would be well to give an explicit statement of the reason for so doing—whether lack of time in the department or extra technicality in the work under discussion.

The rate of 3½ per cent should be certified by the chief engineer as 'fair and just.'

I ask the minister what explanation can possibly be given for going outside the department technical staff and asking a man to prepare plans with such a large consideration as this, no less than \$15,000. If any head of a department may do this without, as the Auditor General properly says, going before Council, where is the limit? The Minister of Public Works would have just as much right to engage an engineer at \$100,000 as at \$15,000. I would ask the minister, who has not been long in his department, are any obligations of this nature now being incurred in connection with any public enterprise? Has the minister himself personally contracted with any engineers or contractors for work outside and if so to what extent? I am not aware that the minister has done anything of this kind, and I wish to ask him what his policy in respect to such undertakings will be in the future.

Mr. PUGSLEY. My hon. friend's question is a very proper one, and one to which answer as full and satisfactory as possible should be given. The facts of the case are that Mr. Vautelet, of Montreal, is an architect enjoying a very high reputation for the erection of large works, more particularly where the construction is of steel. He has done a good deal of work for the Canadian Pacific Railroad in connection with very expensive buildings. As hon. gentlemen are aware, there has been until recent years considerable delay and dissatisfaction in connection with the construction of the important works known as the locks at the St. Andrews' rapids, below Winnipeg. My information is that the then minister, Hon. Mr. Hyman, felt that in undertaking these works, with a view of having them constructed with as little delay as possible, and of the most perfect character, he was justified in calling in the best engineering skill it would be possible to obtain, and it was he who employed Mr. Vautelet, for the superstructure of this dam at the Red River rapids. Hon. gentlemen may ask themselves as to whether or not this was a prudent act on the part of the minister. I am not at all prepared to say that when the department is engaging in a work of great magnitude and unusual character, it is at all imprudent or improper to engage the services of outside engineers or architects. Mr. Hyman took the view that this work required such skill on the part of the designer that his course was in the public interest and I am not prepared to question his judgment. We know that railway companies