

Mr. CLARKE. The hon. gentleman's predecessor in office has twice drawn attention to the fact that there is a scheme on foot to dismantle this department, to disfigure it, to render it less efficient than it is, to discontinue the policy which has been followed for the past five or six years, and which has been attended with such gratifying results. If there is anything in that statement I think we are entitled to know it before we vote any more money.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I cannot give information on a subject of which I know nothing. I think I have answered every question the hon. gentleman has put me frankly and courteously. If the hon. gentleman knows of any scheme, it is for him to answer and not for me.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. I am ready to answer it. We have read a lot of electoral speeches and newspaper articles to the effect that the dredging branch of the Department of Public Works and the harbour improvements are to be transferred to the Department of Marine and Fisheries. But as the government has not yet proposed any such change to the House, I do not think this is the time to discuss it. The hon. gentleman is quite right in asking for information. But as the Prime Minister is not here, I suppose nobody will answer it in his place. While I am on my feet, I will take the opportunity of advising my hon. friend the Minister of Public Works to be very careful indeed in the work to be carried out at Port Arthur and Fort William. Perhaps he has not yet had time to look carefully into that important question. Fort William and Port Arthur are the centres of the trade between the west and the east. We should provide those two harbours with every possible improvement. There has been some work done in the past, but a good deal more requires to be done in the future. I think my hon. friend would do well not to make any bargain that would bind him to do that work piecemeal. The Mission river should be dredged, deepened and widened. Before I left office I instructed one of the ablest officers of the department, Mr. Coste, to make a report of the whole situation. I have been there myself and have inspected all these points, which are of great importance indeed. Let us make Port Arthur and Fort William the rivals of Duluth. Duluth is but a comparatively short distance from these centres of Canadian trade. Fort William and Port Arthur are outlets to our great North-west, and they should therefore be equipped in a proper way. This is not the time perhaps to discuss that question, but I thought it was well for me to ask my hon. friend not to give any contracts now before looking carefully into the situation and coming before us with a complete plan. I thought last year we had about completed all the necessary works in the Kaministiquia river. There was not much left to be done.

Mr. CLARKE. Some dredging to be done near the mouth, I think.

Hon. Mr. TARTE. There is always dredging to be done if you want to do it. But a general plan should now be adopted and carried out.

Mr. BRUCE. I beg to draw the attention of the Minister of Public Works to the fact that there is nothing in the estimates for the port of Hamilton. I notice that there are applications for all the little fishing villages along the coast of the St. Lawrence, but there is nothing in the estimates for the great port of Hamilton, a port large enough to float the whole British fleet. Looking over the Public Accounts, I notice that \$40,000 was expended last year on a little ditch leading through the shallows into Toronto, but not a dollar for Hamilton. I trust the Minister of Public Works will not forget Hamilton when he comes to disperse his \$13,000,000 of a surplus.

Mr. INGRAM. The Minister of Public Works referred to Point Edward in Sarnia as if he intended to do some dredging there. I might ask him what he intends doing at Port Stanley?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. We have completed arrangements to have a dredge at Port Stanley very early during the season. Probably it will be necessary to go more fully into that matter when the supplementary estimates are brought down.

Mr. INGRAM. I was not in when the item was first read, and do not know what explanations the minister gave. May I ask him how many dredges there are in Manitoba now, and if the 'Sir Hector' is one of them?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. I believe one of the tugs in connection with the dredge there is named 'Sir Hector.'

Mr. INGRAM. Is the dredge you have out there an old one or a new one?

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. One is an old dredge and one is comparatively new.

Mr. INGRAM. Last year the department was doing some repairs on the old dredge. I would like to know whether the repairs are completed, and if they are, will that complete all the repairs?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER. I want to say a word to the committee at this stage. I allowed a wide latitude to the discussion of this first item so as to give the members of the committee an opportunity of expressing themselves on the general question of dredging, but they are now leaving that and taking up some items which are immediately below, which they can discuss when they reach them. I now desire to inform the committee that having given them such wide latitude in discussing the question of dredg-