

*Mr. Holton*—My question was whether you had ever heard of these complaints ; whether the complaints of the contractors had been in any manner submitted to you, and reported upon by you with regard to either or to the points of complaint.

*Mr. Fleming*—They were mere verbal complaints ; they never made any complaints in writing that I ever saw.

*Mr. Holton*—Was the matter ever referred to you to report upon, either verbally or in writing?

*Mr. Fleming*—I don't quite understand you. What matter do you mean?—the infirmities of temper?

*Mr. Holton*—It has been stated that there were two complaints against Mr. Smith—one that he over-estimated the amount of work executed, and therefore prepared estimates to the prejudice of the contractor ; and, secondly, that he had such infirmities of temper as rendered it impossible for them to get on harmoniously. Now, my question is, whether either of those complaints ever came before you as Chief Engineer, either verbally or in writing?

*Mr. Fleming*—These complaints with regard to quantities came before me repeatedly. The contractors generally all over the line complained that they were not getting money enough. I tried to find out the cause. They thought the cause was the insufficiency of the estimates of the engineers of the work yet remaining to be done. They prepared a statement on one occasion, shewing what they thought was the work remaining to be done, but it was not prepared by any professional assistance, and I did not attach much importance to it. However, it was sent to Mr. Smith to be examined, and he was asked if there were any errors in his returns, and if so, to rectify them without delay. He replied sometime afterwards that he had gone over, not all, but the principal items, and found his original returns were substantially correct.

*Mr. Holton*—You will have this correspondence, of course?

*Mr. Fleming*—I don't think I have. I sent down the original documents to Mr. Smith.

*Mr. Holton*—I think it was stated by Mr. Walsh at a former meeting of the Committee, that the contractors never prepared any estimates at all ; that such a thing as contractors' estimates were unknown to the Department.

*Mr. Walsh*—Such a thing as paying money upon contractors' estimates.

*Mr. Holton*—But still if these estimates were submitted at all, they were submitted with the view of getting more money than could be got under the engineer's estimates. Was that not a fact?

*Mr. Walsh*—That is very probable ; but they were handed to the Chief Engineer, and he referred them to the District Engineer.

*Mr. Holton*—(To *Mr. Fleming*)—Then the correspondence is not on record in your office?

*Mr. Fleming*—It is not ; I don't think there is a copy in Ottawa ; I am quite sure there is not.

*Mr. Holton*—What is the present position of this matter so far as your Department is concerned, with respect to the complaints of the contractors of under estimates?

*Mr. Fleming*—That is a very common complaint ; I may say it is universal. Every month we hear complaints from all parts of the line that they are not getting money enough.

*Mr. Holton*—Will you state the facts of the case with respect to Mr. Smith's removal? What has been ordered by your department? Mr. Smith has been withdrawn from the line in consequence of these complaints which led to his removal. My question is, what has that action been?

*Mr. Fleming*—There has been no charge ; the same system has been pursued since as before.

*Mr. Holton*—Were no instructions given to Mr. Smith's successor in consequence of the complaints made against Mr. Smith?

*Mr. Fleming*—None whatever. The instructions given to Mr. Smith's successor were substantially those given to Mr. Smith himself, when he first began the work with these contractors.