

Mr. MACDONALD. And about \$100 too much was paid for the machine?

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). The standard price was \$850; they will cost \$951.21.

Mr. PUGSLEY. Were these machines contracted for from the manufacturers or through an agent? The reason I ask is that we all know that the agent's commission on the sale of automobiles is a fairly good one, running all the way from 15 to 25 per cent, and if an ordinary commission was paid in this case the agent would have received a very handsome sum of money—\$1,100 or \$1,200.

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). We wanted to get the machines direct, but we were informed that it would be absolutely impossible. No company would sell except through an agent in the locality where the purchase is made. That is the way the machines were bought. As far as the extras are concerned, I may say that the tires are a special kind of traction tires, I believe, and these and the other attachments are got so that in case these machines were away and anything went wrong they would have the equipment with them. I am very anxious that this whole matter shall be thoroughly investigated. I have just given the facts as they occurred. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Wilcox) made no objection what ever when I first drew his attention to it. I thought I had paid him a compliment in that I had purchased the machines in his riding. His first question was that I should put in a friendly word with the firm for him in order to help him, and then one or two days later he came to me and said: See here, that fellow McGregor is an awful Grit, and you will have to cancel the order and give it to some other person.

Mr. MACDONALD. What was the politics of the agent from whom my hon. friend purchased the automobiles?

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). I think he is a Grit. I never asked a man for a vote in my life, but I think this man is a Liberal.

Mr. MACDONALD. What is his name?

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). His name is Williams.

Mr. KNOWLES. I would like to ask the minister whether he inquired of any other firm if he could get the machines direct and thus avoid the payment of the agent's commission? I know that in my own town eleven men got together and purchased machines. The machines came to them and they got them at net cost or at the same price as they would have cost an agent. If you multiplied the commission eleven or twelve times it would amount to a very considerable sum, and therefore I

Mr. WILCOX.

would ask the minister if he inquired of other firms in order to ascertain if it was possible to save that expense?

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). Yes, and I may say that there were other firms that paid as high as \$500 commission on a machine. If you took a hundred machines from this firm it would not make any difference; you would still have to pay the commission.

Mr. KNOWLES. Will the minister bring down the correspondence with other firms?

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). I did not say that we had correspondence; I said that we consulted with other firms.

Mr. KNOWLES. With the firms?

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). We consulted the agents.

Mr. KNOWLES. The minister knows that the agent has not the authority to say whether the firm will grant a better price or not.

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). The company will not deal except through an agent.

Mr. KNOWLES. I question that statement. I say that the company will deal with people who will take a certain number of machines.

Mr. CARVELL. I do not think we want to take any part in the little family quarrel on the other side as to whether the minister should or should not have bought Ford cars. But, the minister is in error when he says that the company will not sell at less than catalogue prices if you take a large number. I do not know what the Ford Company will do—

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). It is not only the Ford Company, but others.

Mr. CARVELL—but in the last three weeks I have received a letter from the Cadillac Company agreeing to sell machines to three persons at the special agent's discount, and I presume that what the Cadillac Company will do other companies will do. We have no fault to find with the Ford car, but what we say is that the minister has no right to buy automobiles for the general staff to go junketing around the country with.

Mr. LEMIEUX. The minister, while he was on this side of the House, condemned the payment of commissions to middlemen upon purchases by the government. I would like to know from the minister if he intends, when he makes purchases for the Militia Department, to pay a commission to the middlemen?

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). There has been no commission paid to the middleman.