

Supply—Public Works

imposes perhaps a greater burden on the contractor, namely that of producing a receipt before he gets paid. Will the minister tell us how that would impose an extra burden on his staff?

Mr. Fournier (Hull): The answer to that question is an easy one. If I am doing business with an honest man—and I am not speaking of this case, I am speaking of anybody; it is a general comment—and he signs his affidavit that he has paid these bills, even if he gives his word we do not take that in public works; we need the signature. Don't be afraid; if you are dealing with somebody who is not honest, then you can ask for receipts and you can ask for this, that and the other thing, and if he does not find a way of fooling you, I lack experience in human nature.

Mr. Fulton: That does not answer the question.

Mr. Green: But the loan companies—

Mr. Fulton: The minister has not answered my question.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Oh, I told the hon. member that I would take that suggestion into consideration.

Mr. Fulton: Yes, but the minister has answered the suggestion by making another suggestion, namely that it would impose an increased burden on his staff. I asked him to explain in what way it would impose that burden because he has just now said that they ask for an affidavit before they make payment. How would it increase the burden on the minister's staff if he asked for receipts to be attached to that affidavit? There would be no extra burden on his staff.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I will just give the hon. member one instance. This receipt is only a receipt. I would have to have officials to go around to verify the receipt. You can push this argument to the point of absurdity. Do you think it is the time right now to argue the matter? I should like to take a case on these matters in court, but I do not think I can in parliament; I have no judge here.

Mr. Fulton: When I ask the minister if he really thinks it would impose an extra burden on his staff—

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I do.

Mr. Fulton: He has not given us any evidence or any reason to show that it would impose that burden. He answered my question by making another supposition. I asked a simple question. Would the requirement that, in addition to an affidavit, there should

be the production of a receipt impose any extra burden on the minister's staff?

Mr. Casselman: The answer is no.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I am going to tell my officials to consider that matter, but there is a remark made by an experienced man. He says that every two weeks, when you had progress payments, you would have these fellows' receipts and you would have to check up on those receipts and with the one who signed the receipt, to see whether everything really is aboveboard. As I say, we take human nature as we find it, and assume that these are honest people. That is the way I deal with the matter. We take their oath, their signature. I take their lists. I get no complaints. I pay. If the man breaks his leg and two months later I get a complaint, I say, "Do not pay any more money; keep that security deposited; keep the drawback, and we will complete the job and show the country that we have a building for the money they have voted."

Mr. Green: I would point out that the loan companies always require the production of receipts in addition to an affidavit.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Do they ever lose money?

Mr. Green: Occasionally, yes. But I think the Department of Public Works should at least follow that same practice of calling for receipts. Another suggestion I make to the minister is that he have a look at his contract form and have inserted in it a provision that the payments will be made only upon production of receipts. It may be that he already has that provision in his contract form. I should be greatly surprised if it is not there now. But from what the minister has said, it is obvious that if that provision is in the form the practice of the department is such that the provision is not being followed. I would suggest that the minister have his contract form checked.

Mr. Fleming: May I ask the minister if there is in his contract any provision that it shall be the obligation of the contractor to see that the subcontractors are paid, and also the wage earners and suppliers of materials? Is there any provision of that kind in the contract?

Mr. Hosking: Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask a question.

Mr. Fleming: Just a minute. I am waiting for an answer.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I understand from the officers that there is a clause in which he undertakes to pay those who sell him materials. That is his obligation.