

provident contract and are spending money to no purpose, they must go on spending until the end of the contract.

Mr. McCURDY: I am not contending anything of the kind; I am simply making the statement that the matter of the advisability of the work was doubtless decided before the contract was entered into, and we are proceeding at the present time under this contract. Before this contract is completed, investigations will have been initiated and completed, as I assured the hon. member for Westmoreland (Mr. Copp), under conditions where better observations can be made than at present to determine whether further work will be done or what additional action should be taken after the present contract is completed. St. John harbour has not been put under a commission. An Act was passed by Parliament some years ago; but before that would become effective, I think a plebiscite of the citizens of St. John is required. That plebiscite has not yet been taken.

Mr. McKENZIE: There is no such provision as far as I can remember.

Mr. McCURDY: Possibly not. I am not familiar with the communications at that time between the city of St. John and the Government, but I have always understood that the legislation would not become effective until a plebiscite was taken. Until that plebiscite is taken, there is no intention of proceeding further under the legislation.

Mr. FIELDING: Is the contract for a lump sum or for quantities and prices?

Mr. McCURDY: The contract is for estimated quantities at unit prices.

Mr. McKENZIE: I do not hope to get very much practical result from my talk to the minister. It is unwise to say that we are going to continue under this contract until we remove the quantity and expend the amount of money mentioned in the contract, if we are doing no good to the country by that expenditure. There are certainly some well-founded reports that this space dredged is filling in again and it will be the part of wisdom for the minister to satisfy himself whether or not that is the case. If he finds out that the space that we have already dredged is filling up again, he should come to this House for authority to cancel that contract and to take the consequences of cancelling it. I am sure hon. members will stand behind the minister and the department in

[Mr. McKenzie.]

setting aside an undertaking that appears to be abortive. It is not an answer to give to members of this House to say: "Well, I do not know whether this is filling up or not; I do not know whether this work is going to be useless or not; I do not know whether the story that it is filling up as rapidly as it is being removed is true or not; but I have a contract to do a certain quantity of dredging, and I must go on until that is done, and then I will know whether the money has been properly spent or not." That does not seem to be the answer that a business man like the minister should give.

Mr. McCURDY: There is a resident engineer on this work, and I am sure if conditions such as my hon. friend represents existed there the department would be advised. No word of this kind has come to me. I have inquired of the officials of the department, and they say that no report of this kind has come to them. I, therefore, hesitate to believe that the rumours are correct; but I shall, of course, make inquiries at once of the engineer.

Mr. McKENZIE: I presume this engineer, whoever he is, will report only what he is asked to report. He values his head and his life, and he knows very well the feeling in the city of St. John about these expenditures on public works. Any civil engineer who cares to remain on his job in the department and be alive in St. John, is not going to make any report to say that this work is useless unless he is specifically asked to do so, and even then I question very much whether such an engineer would do so.

Mr. McCURDY: I shall send a special engineer to report.

Mr. McKENZIE: The minister should send the best man he has to get a full, conclusive and reliable report as to conditions. I am sure he will find that he is wasting public money if he goes on with the contract.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Guysborough): Is the dredge Tornado still working in Courtenay bay?

Mr. McCURDY: I believe she is still operating in St. John harbour.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Guysborough): She is costing a great deal of money.

Mr. McCURDY: She is paid under this contract. The contractors are entitled to so much per yard under the contract and the