

hind the whole transaction. The only credit in the whole matter that can be given to anybody must be given to the Minister of Justice for having prevented this contract finally going through.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I do not know whether the Minister of Justice is entitled to all the credit which my hon. friend from East Grey (Mr. Sproule) gives him. True, he took particular pains in the drafting of this contract, but his motive may have been to get even with the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) for the course that gentleman took with regard to a certain other matter in which the Minister of Justice was the draughtsman. It may possibly be that his objection was not so much to the contract in question being drawn up in a particular way as to the Interior Department making that contract at all. The Public Works Department was the one he desired to have control of it, and that department is the one which handed over \$109,000 of the public money to the firm of Conmee, Bowman & Company for work at Port Arthur last year, done without any contract at all. The hon. Minister of Justice was not so particular on that occasion to see that a contract was signed, sealed and delivered, and the conditions explicitly set down in it before allowing the work to be given that firm. However, I give the hon. gentleman credit in this instance for seeing that the contract should go to the Public Works Department, and that his bosom friend, the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton), was turned down.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Order.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. He did not get the giving of the contract, at all events. The Minister of Finance has been called in, and it is a very lucky thing for the government that it has that minister at its bidding, because he can make, better than any other hon. gentleman, a satisfactory explanation of any matter, however open to criticism or suspicion. The deal was exposed, and the Finance Minister had to be called in to make it appear that the department was all right. Nevertheless, the methods of the department have been laid bare. We have not yet had an explanation of how the Department of the Interior got the name of this one particular firm which made the tender for this wire fencing, but I presume that will appear in the correspondence. The system adopted in the matter of giving contracts and calling for tenders is gradually becoming understood throughout the country. Tenders are asked for from the particular friends of the ministers and contracts given to them without any conditions being imposed, and they go on and do the work just in what manner they choose. It is very opportune that the omission from 'Hansard' has been supplied. It is found in the 'Hansard' of Monday—just a week's delay—and the explanation given by the

Mr. SPROULE.

letter read by Mr. Speaker to-day explains how that omission took place. To say the least, it was a very unfortunate omission. The Prime Minister's error has been corrected before the House by the reading of the correspondence of the deputy minister of the department. Now that we find that the Department of Justice was on the alert when the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) was concerned, and now that we have the explanation of the Finance Minister, we can proceed, when the estimates come down, to discuss the matter still further; and I would suggest to the Prime Minister that this fencing should not simply be a four-foot three inches fence. For an international fence that is entirely insufficient. It is not even sufficient for an ordinary fence. No ordinary farmer would put up a fence less than four feet six inches, with wooden posts, where there is a possibility of fire running. He would see that the posts were made of cement or iron. The right hon. gentleman has friends in the cement and iron business; and if public contracts must be handed over to the party favourites, at all events let the country get some value, and let us have these posts made of either cement or iron. At all events, this matter will come up later on, and we will then be given a further opportunity of studying the methods and plans of the Department of the Interior. I must again compliment the Minister of Justice on having checked the Interior Department, even though he may have been actuated by some other motive than the welfare of the country at large. I only regret that he has not seen fit to insist on the contracts of the Public Works Department being as specific and being made in as strict compliance with the law as he has done in the case of this contract of the Department of the Interior.

Mr. E. B. OSLER. We have here certainly a very singular combination of errors, if errors they be. We have first the Minister of the Interior—and this is not an error there is no question about that—writing to one firm asking for a bid, not a tender, saying that the government have a certain work to do. We have shortly afterwards the agent of that firm coming down to Ottawa and we find him making an agreement with the Minister of the Interior I presume, with the department, for a work for which we on this side yesterday thought perhaps \$250 a mile would be an exaggerated amount to name, but \$550 a mile when uncompleted is the price agreed upon by this firm without tender for work involving an amount of money that may go into a quarter of a million dollars. We find that agreement so far completed that it is sent to the proper department to have a contract drawn for cementing that agreement. We find shortly afterwards other firms writing asking to