

country into an expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars and do it simply on his own initiative and of his own will? What authorization is there in law for such a thing as that? Have we any laws in this country regulating the giving of contracts entailing the expenditure of public money, which this government feels it is bound to obey in the spirit as well as in the letter? There surely is no authorization in law for any minister undertaking to give a contract for a public work costing \$200,000 without having the authorization of his colleagues in council, and yet this minister undertook to do it and had he not been absent from Ottawa it would have been done. Has it also been the practice, and is it so considered by ministers, that they can do this without a dollar being appropriated by parliament, superbly confident that whatever they have a mind to do they can do it and afterwards come down to the men who sit behind them and say: it is all right, trust the government. And these gentlemen do trust the government and they will see the government through blindly. But what is the administration of public business in this country coming to if such has been the rule and if such can be carried out?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. It has not been carried out.

Mr. FOSTER. It has not been, but what a poor quibble that is, and I must say what an unworthy quibble it is. Why has it not been carried out? Was it because the intention was not to carry it out? No. The only reason why it has not been carried out is, that the minister being absent one of his clerks formally asked the Department of Justice to prepare a contract. A contract had been decided on because the McGregor Company had been informed that their tender would be accepted, and then all that was necessary was a form of contract which the official of the Interior Department applied to the Department of Justice to make out. And it was only when the Minister of Justice in looking at the contract came to the conclusion that the work did not belong to the Interior Department at all but to the Department of Public Works, that he drew the attention of the government to the matter. We want, and we ought to have, all the papers in connection with that transaction. The time for putting notices of motion on the Order Paper has passed, but I have no doubt the Prime Minister will bring down at once all the papers in connection with it. We want not only the correspondence between the government and the wire fence company, but we want the correspondence between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice, or any other department with which they communicated. Apart altogether from his evident desire and intention not to call for public tenders in a matter involving the expenditure of \$200,000 of the people's money;

apart altogether from the evident intention which the Minister of the Interior had to put that through; apart from all that, there comes this question, and I would like to have the answer of the Prime Minister: whether the ministers of the different departments have power or have taken to themselves the power of entering into contracts for public expenditures involving \$100,000 or \$200,000 without having the authorization of council? That is a point which I do not think the Prime Minister has met and which I would like to ask his opinion on before we go further.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. My hon. friend has my answer already as to that. He knows that a Bill was introduced and passed during this session stating that all transactions above \$5,000 should be awarded, not by the minister but by the Privy Council.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. There is an Order in Council.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. There was an Order in Council, but we make it a law of parliament now. That shows what the views of the government are on this subject.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. And on public tender?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Certainly, on public tender.

Mr. BERGERON. Did not that Order in Council exist before?

Mr. FOSTER. Certainly it did.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. There is one thing in which I can agree with my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) and that is that parliament is entitled to have the fullest light on this subject. I think all the papers should be brought down, and they will be brought down.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. Mr. Speaker, there is another aspect of this question that has not been brought out. This is an international question; we are dealing with an international issue, and I do not think the right hon. gentleman can give a single precedent for any action being taken concerning an international boundary without consulting parliament. With regard to the boundary posts between the United States and Canada, a commission was appointed, parliament was consulted, congress was consulted, and a joint arrangement was reached; and if an international boundary fence was to be erected, it would certainly be good financial policy to consult with the adjoining party as to the style of the fence and as to a division of the cost. That is the way farmers deal with each other when they want to build a boundary fence between their farms. I would like to ask the Postmaster General, who represents a farmers' riding, and the Minister of Agriculture, who is supposed to conserve the interests of the farmers of this country, whe-