

Replying to your letter of the 20th ultimo, in reference to the erection of a wire fence at the southern boundary of the Northwest Territories, I beg to state that the government has awarded the contract in this matter.

Then follows an inquiry from these gentlemen to the secretary of the department asking when any advertisement calling for any tenders had appeared. I am not sufficiently familiar with the matter to know whether or not there was an answer given to that letter.

Mr. CLEMENTS. There was no answer to that letter.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. This is most certainly a matter which invites the attention of the right hon. gentleman, or the Minister of the Interior, or some one connected with that department. We had a debate in the House during the present session with respect to the awarding of tenders upon an advertisement which gave very short notice and which practically was equivalent to no advertisement at all. The acting Minister of Public Works (Mr. Hyman) then admitted that the contention of my hon. friend from Simcoe (Mr. Bennett) was correct, and that a new advertisement should be issued in order that intending tenderers might have reasonable notice. According to the information which is now before the House in connection with the present matter, it appears upon the statement of the secretary of the department that a contract has been awarded, and when he is asked with regard to the advertisement he returns no answer whatever. At all events the gentlemen who are interested in the matter and who have been watching for an advertisement have not been able to observe any. It is quite possible that the right hon. gentleman may have been misinformed as to the answer he gave, but that is only a trifling circumstance compared with the real question which is: That a very large contract for wire fencing between Canada and the United States along the boundary of the Northwest Territories, has been awarded without giving any opportunity whatever to those engaged in the business to tender for it. This matter will have to be discussed again when the right hon. gentleman has had an opportunity of looking into it, but it is a very strong indication to him that he should have followed at an earlier date the advice of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, and appointed a Minister of the Interior without that delay which did occur. There have been some very curious proceedings in connection with this matter. I will not dwell upon it to-day, because it is only right that the government should have an opportunity of stating the facts and making their position plain before the House. I venture to think, as the writer of one of these letters says, that it is a little difficult to reconcile the

statement of the secretary of the department with the statement made by the Prime Minister in the House, and it is also a little difficult to reconcile the course pursued with a due regard for the public interest.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Would you please pass me the correspondence?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Certainly.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. There are several very curious coincidences in connection with this matter. First, I draw the attention of the Prime Minister to the fact that we have no evidence that any tenders were called for this enormous work. Suppose we take it as 744 miles from the first meridian to the fifth meridian, and assuming that part of the boundary is in Manitoba, we would have in round numbers, 700 miles to be fenced or a total of 224,000 rods which is a nice tidy little contract for some gentlemen to get without any rivals being allowed to tender. Second: We have the astounding spectacle of the secretary of the department some time ago informing a firm that wished to put in a tender—a firm that is well known throughout the length and breadth of Canada as a wire fence company—we have the secretary of the department informing this firm that the contract has been let, and a few days afterwards the Prime Minister stands up in his place in the House—having received information I dare say from the same department—to state that the contract has not been let, but that the matter is under consideration. Here is another surprising little coincidence, and let me call the attention of the First Minister to it. In looking to 'Hansard' to see the exact terms of the Prime Minister's answer, we find that the whole question and the whole answer is deliberately—I will not say deliberately in the sense that they are intentionally left out—but the whole matter is undoubtedly left out of 'Hansard.'

Mr. FOSTER. Which edition?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. The unrevised 'Hansard' and the revised 'Hansard,' both.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. If it is not in the unrevised or the revised 'Hansard,' I disclaim any responsibility for that at once.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I do not accuse the First Minister. I think that, bad as he is he would be above that. The answer that was given here was undoubtedly furnished by the Department of the Interior, and the peculiar coincidence is that the question and answer are deliberately left out of 'Hansard' the next morning. I am drawing this matter to the attention of the First Minister. Would it be too much to ask him to find out how many of his present or past colleagues in this House are interested in ranching along the American border, and whose property would be render-