

Mr. SPROULE. It seems that there is some blame attachable to different departments.

Mr. SPEAKER. I must again call attention to the fact that there is nothing before the House.

Mr. SPROULE. I shall put myself in order by moving the adjournment of the House. I say it appears that there is blame attachable to different departments. There is to the Department of Finance, which controls the estimates. Several times this session and last session I drew attention to the incorrectness of the estimates.

Mr. FIELDING. Very seldom it occurs.

Mr. SPROULE. Several times items were put in as revotes which were not revotes. I think this was a case in which the item was put in as a revote although there had been no vote before. I drew attention to the irregularity with which the estimates were made up, their incorrectness, and the loose business methods that seemed to prevail in the various departments. There is certainly blame attachable to some person in the Department of the Interior for the attempt to let a contract, involving an expenditure of over a quarter of a million dollars, without inviting public tenders, without the money being voted, and in advance of any action by parliament. That is entirely improper, irregular, loose and unbusinesslike. Yet there is no denying the fact that it took place, and had the Minister of Justice not stopped the deal, it undoubtedly would have gone on. We are in the habit of abusing the Minister of Justice, and I want to give him credit for this action. I do not know whether it was done out of his overflowing love for the Minister of the Interior or out of his burning desire to protect the public treasury. I am bound to assume that it was the latter, because that was a more praiseworthy motive. At any rate, he accomplished it, and the expenditure is not going on to-day owing to the astuteness of the Minister of Justice and his close attention to business.

But I want to draw attention to another fact. Why was the Department of Justice invited to send to the Department of the Interior a draft of contract, if the tender was not accepted, if the transaction was not practically concluded and the contract practically let? That the transaction was practically concluded is the only conclusion we can come to, because otherwise the Department of Justice would not have been invited to draft a binding agreement. A most reprehensible looseness is shown in every step in connection with this matter up to the moment the Minister of Justice interfered and put a stop to the further proceedings. Whatever his motive may have been, he was certainly right in doing this. But I want to draw particular attention to another feature. I listened to the condi-

tions of the tender submitted by that McGregor Company, and I find that although the specifications are sufficiently plain with regard to the number of strands and the distances apart at which the posts should be placed—one post at every twenty feet—there is nothing to show of what material the posts were to be made. I presume they were to be made of wood, but what kind of wood? The kind of wood is very important. The most common wood in that country is the poplar. That is very plentiful, and would come up to the size required; but it is well known that in the ground it rots very quickly in a very few years, and that it rots quickly either in the ground or out of it. If these posts were to be made of cedar, they would be much more durable; but there is not a word in the letter regarding the class of wood. Therefore, it was optional with the contractor to supply any kind of posts he chose, and he would naturally supply poplar, because that is the cheapest he could get, although it is likewise the most useless. This indicates the looseness with which these contracts are made, if it indicates nothing worse; and there must have been an understanding that the contract would be drawn in this way, leaving the contractor to supply whatever kind of posts he liked, and providing a very nice opportunity for a rake-off for somebody. And I have no doubt that in the end there would have been something of the kind. I draw attention to these features which have come out in this debate. First, there was no public invitation for tenders, and consequently no competition, although there was an expenditure of about a quarter million dollars of the people's money involved. The Order in Council which is always invoked, and which provides that no contract shall be let for over five thousand dollars without first advertising for tenders, was completely ignored. Then there is the private letter written to a company intimately associated with the minister of the Crown, and which had done many jobs for him before, and that invitation was the only competition invited for this contract involving an expenditure of \$225,000. Again, this contract was entered into and the expenditure incurred before the money was voted by parliament. The right hon. the First Minister has told us that when we are asked to vote the money will be time enough for us to consider the conditions of the contract as an international affair. It seems to me that good business foresight would rather have dictated the considering of that matter beforehand, and that to leave its consideration to the last moment, when it is likely to be dealt with in a perfunctory way, is not an evidence of good business acumen. When we consider all these things, when we consider that the contract was practically let in the way I have mentioned, we cannot fail to conclude that there was something very detrimental to the public interest be-