

lars without the consent of the head of the department, without consent of the Prime Minister, and without the concurrence of the parliament whose right alone it is to decide whether this work shall be constructed, and, if so, to vote the money for it? No official should expend or even propose to expend a single dollar toward the erection of such a fence until the money has been voted by parliament. There are certain things the government has a right to do, I admit; but an undertaking like this is one of the things that, as I say, are beyond the right and power of the government unless it has received the sanction of parliament. I am glad this matter has been brought up, because I think it will be a salutary lesson to the officials of the different departments; it will be a warning to them in the future to be more careful how they handle the people's money not having the consent of the people's representatives.

Hon. GEORGE E. FOSTER. The statement of my hon. friend from Halton (Mr. Henderson) is one which, I hope, the Prime Minister will take into consideration in giving the information which he proposes to give to-morrow. It surely cannot be that a contract for from \$100,000 to \$250,000 would be let, whether by open or by private tender, or any steps taken for letting it, until a definite estimate had been brought down and a vote passed by parliament. I cannot but think that my hon. friend (Mr. Henderson) must be mistaken in that respect, because to let such a contract under such circumstances would be to do a thing that even this government would hesitate before attempting. But we ought not to feel surprised if a thing of this kind has taken place in the Department of the Interior—particularly in the Department of the Interior. This government commenced by doing away largely with cabinet responsibility, and by throwing upon each individual minister the work of his own department not revised by the cabinet as a whole.

When you put a strong willed minister in charge of the department and give him his own free will, these things inevitably happen. It happened early in the career of this government. The Minister of Railways and Canals did work on a large scale in the province of Prince Edward Island and other provinces without ever having consulted his colleagues in the cabinet at all; and I believe some very bad quarters of hours were lived by various ministers regarding what took place in that respect. That was a gross instance of what I mention, and it had some effect probably in the cabinet,—how much I do not know. Then you take this same Department of the Interior; a strong self-willed man is put in charge. He immediately selects his own favourites, his former henchmen, those who had done him service politically, and he put them in positions and

advanced them to positions in the department, irrespective of merit, length of service, or anything of the kind. Favourites installed in that way have strong influence on the minister. They know what they have done for him and what the minister owes them, and they do not hesitate, when the right time comes, to push their advantage. Look at the humiliating confession made in parliament by the ex-Minister of the Interior himself. It was on the occasion of the Saskatchewan land business. A certain block of land was sold at a song, given away for some money and a little more scrip, but the conditions were laid down, solemnly agreed upon, and brought to this parliament. One of the conditions was that they should perform their obligations and make their payments before getting their patents. It came out however in this House—it was brought out by some hon. gentleman on this side—that the patents were issued before the conditions were fulfilled, and that this was done without the cognizance of the minister, and the minister had to make a confession in the House that he did not know it was done or he would not have allowed it. That official is still in the department. He actually gave to these gentlemen patents for their lands when they had not fulfilled their conditions, and the only excuse given by the minister was that it had not come to his attention until too late. This transaction is on the same basis. They have had their fling and their run in that department. They knew that the Prime Minister was easy, and they proposed to have it when there was no minister particularly in charge. In this way this has gone on. There are some things in connection with that department which merit the immediate attention of the new Minister of the Interior, and I hope he will give them his honest attention. There have been too many rumours regarding that department, too many suspicions of jobs carried out in it; and what I hope now is that an honest administration of that department will take place. But what ought to take place certainly is that parliament should not be trifled with and that no Prime Minister or minister should be given false information by which to mislead the House. It may be all a mistake that can be cleared up as a misunderstanding; but it looks now as if it were gross carelessness, or something worse, that when a contract of that kind had been given, the First Minister should have had a wrong answer put into his hand. The same thing took place earlier in the session, and I called the right hon. gentleman's attention to it. With Mr. Pedley, one of the officers of the department, sitting right before him, the right hon. gentleman was made to give to this House information which was absolutely incorrect and to provide promotion in that department on this false information; and the only reason the Prime Minister had for giving it, was the information with which he had been furnished. Now his own secre-

Mr. HENDERSON.