

that the minister was not here last fall attending to the duties of his office. It is a matter that almost every member of the House was acquainted with. The next point is that tenders were not invited for this work which was an open violation of the Order in Council which provides that all public works involving an expenditure of more than \$5,000 shall be let by tender. This could not be let by tender. Why was it not let by tender? Why was there an open and flagrant violation of the law? I would like to ask that question of the right hon. Prime Minister who is responsible for carrying out the law as we understand it. It was for a good purpose that such a law was made. The next question I wish to direct attention to is, that, from all the information we can gather from those who profess to be familiar with this class of work, it was let for a much larger sum than it could be done for, that it cost at least 95 cents per square yard over and above what it should have cost. Then, if we remember that the contract was given to a company which holds the patent for this work, that no others could tender for it and that there was no competition, it must be evident that it was given to them at their own figure. The hon. acting minister says that they paid no more than the city paid for the same work. I assume that the city got the work done by the same company and that there was no competition. There was no person to compete with the company, they holding the patent of this invention, or whatever you call it. Therefore, there could be no competition and I have no doubt they got the work at a figure which gave them a very good return in the way of profits and otherwise. Then, it was given to a very old friend of the government, to a firm that has been very useful to the government, one of the important members of which is a handy man ready to run for them when they cannot get a candidate anywhere else. He is ready to stump the country in favour of the Liberals anywhere; he was in my riding stumping against me; he was in several other ridings, he was around the city of Toronto; he was always the handy man available when nobody else could be got to take the stump or to run as a candidate when they were hard up for a candidate. Mr. Robinette never deserted the government until a few months ago when he refused to run for Centre Toronto, and then the government had become so unpopular that he dared not take chances. We do not know whether or not he is likely to get this other contract, but at least we do hope that the publicity which has been given to this transaction may induce the government to let the next contract according to the provisions of the law. Let them give the contract by public tender and by public competition, let them keep themselves within the law, and see that the country gets a fair return for every dollar that is spent.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. We ought to have some explanation from the Prime Minister as to why the terms of this statute are violated with such extreme frequency. There is a very plain provision of the law:

The minister shall invite tenders by public advertisement for the execution of all works except in cases of pressing emergency in which delay would be injurious to the public interest, or in cases in which from the nature of the work it can be more expeditiously and economically executed by the officers and servants of the department.

There was no pressing emergency in this case, and it did not even come within the terms of the Order in Council—as to whether the government were within that section in passing the Order in Council, I shall not discuss for the moment;—it does not come within the terms of that Order in Council which enables the government to give contracts without public competition where the amount involved is under \$5,000, because according to the statement of the Minister of Public Works this contract was for 4,250 square yards at \$2.25 per square yard amounting to \$9,562.

Mr. HYMAN. I think I stated that the original contract was for a lesser amount.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Was it for less than \$5,000?

Mr. HYMAN. I am not sure as to that. My own impression is that it was in the neighbourhood of \$5,000; it was extended some months after I came to the department to cover the whole area in front of the buildings.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not much care whether it was originally \$5,000 or not, because it was practically the one piece of work and it is a flagrant disregard of the statute to start with a work which costs about \$5,000, intending to extend it to \$10,000. There is no difference in principle between doing that and starting with the idea of expending \$10,000 in the first instance, because the statute would be absolutely evaded if any such course of procedure as that which has been indicated by the Minister of Public Works had been followed. The manner in which this work was let is in absolute disregard of the plain terms of the statute which every citizen in this country is bound to obey, and which the government of Canada in connection with the administration of public works is specially bound to obey. In view of what has passed, the Acting Minister of Public Works should lay upon the table as soon as possible a statement showing the exact date at which the contract was let—I understood him to say in reply to my hon. friend from East Grey that the contract was let last fall—

Mr. HYMAN. I may have made a mistake there; I meant that the work was done last fall.