

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I have not such information.

Mr. HAGGART. The price is in the letter you read.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. The price is \$550 per mile and 200 miles are proposed to be erected—one hundred this year and one hundred next year.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. At what price?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. The price asked for was \$550, but we have no appropriation for this at present. It has to be voted by parliament.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. It seems that this is a contract involving about \$110,000 namely, 200 miles at \$550 per mile. I do not know anything about the usual price. Some gentlemen have named as the usual price a sum less than one half that given by my right hon. friend. I do not know anything about it from personal knowledge; but what I do wish to call attention to is this, that except for the incident that the ex-Minister of the Interior (Mr. Sifton) resigned in the month of February last, that contract would have gone through. My right hon. friend shakes his head. With what warrant does he signify his dissent? The matter had gone this far, that a contract had been asked for from one single firm and public tenders had not been advertised for at all as the statute required. A contract had been called for from one firm for the construction of 200 miles of fencing at what seems to be regarded as a very high price; and the only reason it was not put through and the country did not become liable to pay that sum, was the incident to which I have referred. Does the right hon. gentleman dissent from that? Is it not stated in the letter he has read that the matter had gone so far that a formal contract had been sent to the Department of Justice?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. What was the answer of that department?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not know.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I gave it.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. My right hon. friend did not read the letter very distinctly.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. That was not in the letter. The Department of Justice, in reporting on the contract, suggested that if awarded, it should be awarded by the Department of Public Works after tenders had been invited.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Which shows that the Department of Justice is of some value to the country sometimes, if that be the case. But the intention of the Department of the Interior was there all the same. We have seen a great many instances of this kind where such an intent

has been fully carried out and has not been prevented by an application to the Department of Justice. The statute is in distinct terms. This throws a very strong light on the management of the Department of the Interior. Section 7 of the Public Works Act provides that the Minister of Public Works shall have the management and direction of telegraph lines, &c., and all other property which now belongs to Canada and also the works and properties acquired, constructed, enlarged, repaired or improved at the expense of Canada. Section 13 provides that the minister shall invite tenders by public advertisement for the execution of all government works except in certain instances, with which the present case is not concerned. It seems remarkable that for a period of about two months the Page Wire Fence Company has been under the impression upon information furnished by the Department of the Interior—not only directly but through Mr. Speaker—that this contract had actually been let? When the Department of Public Works received the opinion from the Department of Justice, they had already embarked on the policy of constructing this wire fence. Why did they not at once advertise for tenders, if they intended to carry out and comply with the law? The matter was pressing in the month of January last, so pressing that one firm—a firm connected with a very strong supporter of the present administration—was invited to make an offer. There was haste then. They were getting ready for the approaching season; and in the month of March, or a little later on, the Department of the Interior ascertained from the Department of Justice that it was necessary to have this work carried out by the Department of Public Works and that tenders and advertisement were required under the law. Why was not this company which was making inquiry, not only directly, but through his honour the Speaker, informed of the decision of the Department of Justice and told that advertisements calling for tenders would appear in the public press very shortly? That is a very pertinent question. I do not know whether my right hon. friend will answer it by shaking his head. That is a very convenient way of disposing of these matters. I did not catch the date of the letter of the Department of Justice.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I have not got the date.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. In the early part of March?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. In the early part of March.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Two months ago and more, and all this haste which was apparent in the month of January when this contract was proposed to be given to a sup-