

#### GAOL ADDITIONS.

On the motion of Hon. Mr. FRASER the Bill respecting aid towards gaol additions and alterations was read a third time and passed.

#### THE PUBLIC WORKS.

Hon. Mr. CROOKS moved the House into Committee of Supply.

Mr. CAMERON said that from matters which had come up before the Public Accounts Committee, and the statement made by the Commissioner of Public Works, showing that the Government had been giving out the contracts for the public works without inviting tenders by public advertisement, so as to give all an opportunity of competing, and thus enable the country to get the work done in the most economical manner, he felt it necessary to place in the hands of the Speaker a motion which would test the opinion of the House as to the correctness of the course pursued by the Government and the Commissioner of Public Works. From the declaration of the Commissioner of Public Works it appeared, with regard to the Inebriate Asylum at Hamilton, which was estimated to cost a certain sum, that tenders were invited by public advertisement, but it was found the tenders were not taken, and the estimated cost of the building. Very extensive alterations were resolved upon without any communication with this House, and the contracts for the altered work were let without the work having been put up for public competition. If it were essential in the first instance that tenders should be invited, it was equally necessary and proper that tenders should be invited in the second instance. He found, in reference to the cottages for the insane at London Lunatic Asylum, the same principle was pursued, with this difference, that no tenders were invited by public advertisement at all. With regard to that work he found the Commissioner of Public Works sent around an officer in his department to such persons as he thought fit to apply to for tenders. This course he considered to be more objectionable and objectionable than the giving out the work without tender. With regard to the Central Prison in the amounting to \$81,530 had been done without contract of any kind. A superintendent had been appointed, and that superintendent purchased the materials. Shortly after the Government had the possession of the works—he thought within three days—half the men who had been thoroughly satisfied with the wages they had received from Mr. Elliot and the other contractors, struck for higher wages, and the work had to be paid for at a very much advanced price. The Government, since that time, had lost at least from \$50 to \$100 a day. The hon. gentleman further took the work out of the hands of the contractor without advertising for tenders for the completion of the work. He found, also, in relation to certain other works in reference to the Central Prison, that a contract had been let to Mr. Dickey without invitations for tenders having been given by public contract, and he had no doubt that the hon. Provincial Secretary would endeavour to justify the giving of the contract to that gentleman by the fact that he got work from the Sandfield Macdonald Government without such tender, but the circumstances were in no way analogous. In this instance the hon. gentleman merely sent to Mr. Dickey and Mr. Currie to get tenders, and no opportunity was given for public competition. He (Mr. Cameron) was satisfied that the expenses of the country had been greatly increased by the course hon. gentlemen had pursued, and he believed it was the acknowledged practice of both political parties that all kinds of public works should be put up to public competition, and that public money should not go to enrich friends and supporters of the Government without this competition. This practice had not been followed out in the present case, and therefore he felt impelled to move the following amendment:—"That all the words in the original question after 'that' to the end be omitted, and the following substituted:—"It appears, by the report of the Architect and Engineer of the Public Works Department, that work to the extent of \$81,530 has been done at the Central Prison, a work under the control of the Government of the Province, under the superintendence of one J. P. Wagner, by day labour, and by the purchasing of material at private contract, without having invited tenders by public advertisement for such work, and submitted the same to public competition. That it further appears that the Inebriate Asylum at Hamilton, the cottages for insane patients at the London

Asylum, the fence around the Parliament Buildings at Toronto, and other public works, have been let to contract without competition having been invited therefor by public advertisement, except in the case of the Inebriate Asylum, for which tenders had been invited by public advertisement, but, after such tenders were received, alterations in the plans were made, and the contract for the altered work was given out without tenders having been asked by public advertisement. That it further appears from the said report, and on investigation of the public accounts by the Public Accounts Committee, that the said Central Prison works had been let under contract to one John Elliot after public competition, and was by order of the Government taken out of the hands of the said Elliot for the alleged reason that he was not making sufficient progress with the work, and placed under the superintendence of the said Wagner on the 18th day of September last past; that the men then employed on the said works, although they were satisfied with the wages they had been receiving from the said Elliot, within two or three days after the works were taken charge of by the Government, struck for higher wages, and such wages were increased from 25c to 50c a day, whereby the said men had to be employed thereafter for months at a loss of not less than \$50 to \$100 a day to the Government, by reason of the said work not having been put up to public competition; and this House feels called upon to express the opinion that the Government has set aside a well established practice in Constitutional Government in having let to contract extensive public works without the safeguard afforded by public competition invited by public advertisement."

Hon. Mr. FRASER said that it was quite clear the hon. member for East Toronto had chosen this particular juncture to make the motion he had because he knew it was just the time when it would embarrass the Government most—when they wished the House to go into Committee of Supply. The hon. gentleman was not even content to take broad ground with reference to the tender, but chose to mix up all the questions which had been brought before the House, either directly or indirectly, relating to tendering. One would have thought that the Central Prison question had been so fully discussed that even hon. gentlemen opposite would be satisfied, but those hon. gentlemen would not be content with anything. There was not a single move of this Government with reference to Public Works which was not objected to by gentlemen on the other side of the House. One might fancy, from the manner in which the Central Prison matter was brought before them, that Mr. John Elliot had some special counsel or agent in this House. (Hear, hear.) He did not know how much or how little ground there might be to suspect that hon. gentlemen were advocating the claims of Mr. John Elliot for compensation for loss sustained by him on account of the Government having improperly taken work out of his hands. However, he might repeat what he had said, that this matter, he had thought, had been sufficiently discussed before the House and country, and through the public journals and otherwise, to satisfy the House and people that this Government, in taking the action they did with reference to the Central Prison, had done nothing but what was perfectly honest and just.

Mr. CAMERON—I thought what we were discussing before was the conduct of the Commissioner of Public Works.

Mr. FRASER said that they had had this matter up in the Address and on different other occasions. The facts with regard to the Central Prison and Mr. John Elliot's contract were, that the Government, acting on behalf of the Province, found that that gentleman was so managing his contract that he would be unable to complete it by the time stipulated by him, and by the time required under the contract with the Canada Car Company, and repeatedly drew his attention to this fact, and gave him notice that if by a certain day he had not added to the number of his men so as to be able to push on the work, the contract would be taken from him. After a time, when they saw that he paid no attention to the warnings they had given him, they took the contract from him, and then they found that he had let out a considerable portion of the work on sub-contracts. Gentlemen opposite would not certainly say that when Mr. Elliot did this he did not make as good bargains as he could, and if so, they would not say that the Government did an unwise thing in continuing the work under the sub-contractors at the prices at which they had taken it from Mr. Elliot. The reason, probably, that hon. gentlemen opposite had first brought the Central Prison matter before the House, was that they had