

Mr. Meredith—On Monday next—Address for a return giving the names of the present holders of timber limits in the Mackoka and Parry Sound Free Grant Districts, to whose limits the special rate of dues imposed under the Order of Council of 4th October, 1871 applies. Also for a copy of the said Order in Council, and of the petition presented by certain mill owners and manufacturers of the said districts praying for a reduction of such dues, with the several names appended to each petition. Also, for copies of all reports made by any officer of the Crown Lands Department upon the said petition, and the matters therein contained.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE.

This Committee met yesterday morning at 10 o'clock Mr. Springer in the chair. The sitting was taken up with a rather lengthened discussion among the members with reference to the relative position of towns and villages in the matter of bridge accommodation and maintenance. Several gentlemen appeared before the Committee and gave expression to the feeling prevalent in the districts wherein they resided.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

THURSDAY, Feb. 8.

This Committee met at 10 a.m., Mr. Clarke (Wellington) in the chair.

J. W. BRIDGLAND, recalled, deposed:—To the Chairman—I received yesterday a requisition from this Committee for any tenders, lists, or prices in connection with supplies furnished to the Department by W. & R. Griffith for colonization roads in the years 1868-74 inclusive; Messrs. William and Robert Griffith never, to my knowledge, sent in tenders to the Crown Lands Department for supplies for colonization roads except in the year 1874, which last are in the hands of the Committee now; neither were any price lists furnished at any time to my knowledge; in all the years from 1868 to 1874 there was no competition; up to 1867 there was no comparison between Griffith's goods and others; when buying, I examined articles or samples; we did not re-examine goods except when something new was ordered; there were a few complaints from the roads about the goods.

To Mr. Gibbon—Up to 1874 the same system was pursued; previous to 1867 the overseers supplied themselves.

To Mr. Meredith—I was instructed by the Commissioner to change the mode in 1874; the overseers sent in their bills and vouchers for payment of supplies when they selected the supplies themselves; this was previous to 1867.

To Mr. Hardy—The change I refer to in 1874 is asking for tenders.

To the Chairman—The Department instructed the overseers what kind of supplies to purchase. They would supply themselves from any convenient place when they could purchase previous to 1867; if articles were purchased which were not allowed by the Department they would be condemned, and the men themselves have to pay; if the price of an article was exorbitant the party supplying was written to; the prices were judged by what the articles could be got for here.

To Mr. Lauder—I have tried to make improvements in the operations of the Department since 1867.

To the Chairman—We are still making improvements.

To Mr. Hardy—I don't think there is any advantage in obtaining tenders for groceries if the officer who buys be a person of capacity and integrity; I regard Mr. Cashman as an expert in the purchase of groceries, and a man of capacity and integrity.

R. J. GRIFFITH, recalled, deposed to the Chairman—The only tender we gave was a price list. We understood that the officers of the Government were soliciting price lists from other houses.

To Mr. Ferris—I received the memorandum from the Committee. I did not bring the figures from my books as to the amount of goods sold to the Government in 1868. The goods were all supplied according to the quotations furnished to the Government officers or samples shown to them; quotations were submitted generally at the beginning of the year, at which time we would get the order, supposed to supply the greater part of the year; we subsequently got orders and supplied them without sending quotations; in each year this course

was pursued; that would be the index of the prices at that particular time; if prices advanced or declined during the year the Government would be treated as any other good cash customer, and the goods would be taken without any further test beyond seeing that they agreed with current market rates; there was no change until the change in the spring of 1874, when the head of the Crown Lands Department was changed; the change was that Cashman came to the office to get tenders, which we gave him; Cashman first took the tenders in the spring of 1874; it was only through the Department that I knew anything at all about Cashman; the old quotations were only written out; I think the tenders Cashman wanted were printed; I don't see that there was much difference in the mode of doing this; the greatest difference was that we didn't get the orders; I do not know that a better method of getting the supplies could be suggested; I think Government always got as well supplied as any other customer; the goods went to the Government the same as to any one else; their complaints were very seldom, and never serious; we always tried to make things right if there were complaints; I would not be able to tell without seeing the goods if Jaffray's prices in 1874 were right; the transactions would be between Mr. Jaffray and the Government officer; we knew nothing of any other than them having control.

To Mr. Meredith—The orders were always put in writing, and I think the overseers always brought memorandums of what they wanted; it would not be possible to give the same tea all the year round; an equal value could be got—the same applies to sugars and syrups; when Mr. Cashman called in 1874 there was nothing of a special nature in the interview to give an idea that we would not get an order; our dealings with the Department, so far as we knew, were quite satisfactory; (synopsis of tenders produced and shown to witness); these tenders bear out that, I think, ours was the fairest price there; no merchant would form an opinion without examining the samples; we always thought that the Government should supply the men with a good grade; I do not think there is any guide to some of these figures, unless samples were put before them.

To Mr. Macdougall—There are only three or four grades of buyers, and a merchant could easily understand what should be sent; the prices quoted show the judgment of the merchants themselves as to what quality of article should be sent.

To Mr. Ferris—It would not be unusual for a merchant to agree to furnish a government or contractors with the same grade and value of an article at a stated price for a particular period after samples had been examined.

To Mr. Ferris—I have been in business fifteen years; I don't know that we ever had a written contract of the kind which I have described as not unusual; I don't know that we ever had a contract with the Government or any one else without the quantity being specified, or being pretty well understood; we never had a contract to supply a certain quality at a certain price in unlimited quantities.

To Mr. Hardy—Our tender was lower than Mr. Jaffray's, except for tea; (the witness was here examined at some length as to prices); we would send the goods to the nearest station, and send duplicate bills to the Department; we sent shipping bills sometimes to Mr. Bidgeland, whom we always considered the officer of the Department; our letter of 25th August, 1871, was sent to Mr. Cameron because we were glad to see him appointed; he is an old personal friend.

To the Chairman—I think we showed Mr. Cashman samples in 1874; I think he asked for them; previous to 1872 the goods were not always inspected by the persons ordering them.

Mr. MACDOUGALL (Simcoe)—From your experience as a merchant, do you consider that the so-called tenders asked from merchants by the Crown Lands Department were of any advantage to the Government in respect to the quality and price of the goods ultimately furnished?

Witness—I don't think there is much advantage gained; it depends a great deal upon the respectability of the house; tenders might be asked for and unfair prices given, and any loss might be made up to the house on subsequent orders, so that I don't think the Government would gain much; I look upon the tenders produced as formal tenders; this tender would not be