

*Supply—Public Works*

of pleasure to the public. I read this from the *Temperance Advocate* in relation to the minister:

Our federal Minister of Public Works "cuts no corners on the high principles he established for himself in early life".

There are no curryings of favour or salesbaiting offerings permitted in his office. Such gifts, we understand, are all returned.

We commend the minister for his courage and the definiteness of his witness. The Hon. Howard C. Green is a teetotaler.

Let us have a statement from the minister on this patronage question and what steps he has taken to stamp it out.

The other point that I should like to bring to the minister's attention is this, and this may be a question of patronage or of inefficiency. When we get to the place in his estimates that deals with the central heating plant here and the boilers I expect, Mr. Chairman, that we will get a very clear explanation as to why the central heating plant is flooded with boilers at the present time, some of which are not being used, and at the same time we have some figures in the estimates for more boilers.

**Mr. Robichaud:** Mr. Chairman, it was not my intention to take part in this debate on the first item of the estimates of the Department of Public Works. However, after listening to the long, elaborate and glorified statement made by the minister in introducing the estimates of his department on Friday last I felt it was an invitation that could not be turned down.

Before expressing my disagreement with some of the statements made by the minister I should like to express my appreciation for the co-operation received not only from the Minister of Public Works but from the officers of his department, and this applies to the deputy minister, to the officers and engineers in the field. On different occasions I have had the opportunity to follow the work of some of these engineers, and I can assure the committee that they spare no time and effort to solve the difficult problems placed before them.

I regret that I cannot agree with the minister's statements and the emphasis placed on the supposed accelerated program of construction by his department. In listening to the minister on Friday last one might have been inclined to believe that this was the first year that new projects were initiated by the federal Department of Public Works. The Canadian people still recall the Prime Minister's description of those prospective public works projects as a great national development which, to use his own words, "would swing into action immediately and

would be part of his party's national development policy." In fact, he called it a very extensive and challenging program. It was to be a program which, in the Prime Minister's own words, "was to ensure the development of our country and to provide as well help to Canadians, work to Canadians and an opportunity for the better things of life." These projects were to total \$280 million during the first quarter of 1958 and \$1,185 million for the full calendar year.

When we listened the day before yesterday to the report on unemployment given the house by the Acting Minister of Labour, and learned that as of May 31 there were over 500,000 Canadians seeking unemployment insurance benefits, we on this side of the house felt that the public works program was not too effective. At this point I want to mention that we of the official opposition are not rejoicing about the large number of unemployed we have in the country today, because after all if there are 500,000 Canadians applying for unemployment insurance benefits there must be another quarter of a million who are out of work and whose benefits have expired.

When one listened to the minister's roll call of public works projects, followed by the diversified version supplied by the hon. member for Halifax, one might have been led to believe that never before in the history of this parliament had a series of new public works projects been undertaken by the government department responsible for such works. It has been made clear by the hon. member for Levis that the Prime Minister's great vision of a public works program offers very little in new projects of major importance, and it can be termed as nothing but the continuation of a routine departmental construction program, including many Liberal projects already under way such as the St. Lawrence seaway, the northern Ontario pipe line and others.

At this point I should like to place on record the total public works expenditures for the fiscal years 1953-54 to date. In 1953-54 the federal Department of Public Works spent \$144,581,000. In 1954-55 the same department spent \$157,287,000, an increase of \$13 million over the previous year. In 1955-56 the amount spent was \$167,865,000, an increase of \$10 million over the previous year. In 1956-57 the amount spent was \$173,592,000, an increase of \$6 million over the previous year, and in 1957-58 the amount spent was \$191,426,000; an increase of \$18 million over the year before. The estimates for the present fiscal year, including the supplementary estimates tabled in the house, amount to \$233 million.

These figures, with the exception of the last one, have been taken from the summary of standard expenditures attached to the main estimates for each fiscal year. The last