

Supply—Justice

to the penetrating observations of my colleague the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate.

The minister should, I submit, give us an explanation, in addition to the reasons he has already given, as to why the Department of Justice should continue to duplicate, with all the additional expense involved, the work of another department in the construction of these major institutions and similar projects. The answer given a few moments ago by the Minister of Justice, considered in the light of the indictments which were made against the former administration by his colleagues, is one which requires further explanation, and I hope it will be an adequate explanation.

Mr. Fulton: I will be glad to give an extended reply. I did not think it would be necessary for me to give a very extended answer in justification of this program which, incidentally, has been in effect for 75 years. I did not think it would be necessary for me to give an extended reply to an hon. gentleman who was a member of the government which itself carried on the same program for 22 years; but if the hon. member for Essex East sat all the years he did in the former administration without realizing what are the advantages of carrying on in this manner, and the justification for doing so, I will be glad to rehearse them to him.

I have already indicated some of the reasons, but I did it shortly. Now I will expand on what I said before. It is recognized, and should be recognized by anyone who approaches this question from a common sense point of view, that the problem of maintaining and repairing the very considerable investment in buildings which the taxpayers of Canada have with respect to penitentiaries poses special difficulties, because here we are dealing with a branch which is responsible for the custody and maintenance and discipline and training of inmates of penitentiaries. This is not the kind of problem with which the Department of Public Works deals. It is therefore considered—and, I think, on the soundest basis of common sense—that it is necessary for us to maintain in the penitentiaries branch a constructional, architectural and engineering service if for no other reason than for the purpose of supervising the maintenance and repair work which is carried out in the great majority of cases by inmate labour, and which does not lend itself to the type of construction under contract which is widely used by the Department of Public Works.

Since, therefore, it is necessary for this branch to maintain an architectural and engineering service, with the considerable staff necessary to supervise this work in the ten institutions in Canada from coast to coast

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

—ten major institutions—it is a matter of common sense and economy that they should at the same time take responsibility for new construction.

The hon. member for Essex East is very short in his recollection and quite inaccurate in his summary of the nature of the construction that is undertaken. It is the normal case that the maximum of construction is done by inmate labour. This, of course, poses a special problem. It is the type of construction and type of problem that the Department of Public Works is not accustomed to handling.

It is true that in the new institutions at St. Vincent de Paul and Joyceville the majority of the work is being done by outside contractors. The reason for that is that there was a very great element of urgency in getting those buildings completed, and we would not pretend that doing it by inmate labour, or doing the majority of the work by inmate labour, is as fast as calling in an outside contractor; but much more work would have been done by inmate labour even in the construction of those new institutions were it not for the urgency of providing the new accommodation.

Nevertheless there is a substantial element of prison population being employed, and my hon. friend is quite wrong when he says there is no inmate labour employed on the new construction. There is. We have had inmates working in Joyceville almost from the time the walls were completed because a great deal of the interior finishing and installation is being done by the inmates and we have had a substantial inmate population there almost from the time that construction was commenced. The same thing, of course—

Mr. Pickersgill: May I ask a question on the point?

Mr. Fulton: May I just finish, and I shall be glad to answer the question after. Incidentally, I am told that with respect to the construction of the very large penitentiaries, for instance Prince Albert, the major part, if not the whole of it, was done by penitentiary labour, so that the type of construction and the problems that have to be met in cases of penitentiary construction, whether of new buildings or of repairs and renovations to existing institutions, are of a nature that require immediate supervision and immediate control within the penitentiary branch itself. The only way to accomplish that is to maintain our own engineering and architectural service, which has been the pattern followed for 75 years.

There is, I think, absolutely nothing inconsistent in the pattern still being followed