

the system, and I must say that he has been remarkably frank. Is that the way in which the government, who are trustees for the people, and who are spending, not their own, but the money of the people, should deal with public revenue. Suppose they were to apply to the public expenditure the principle on which any ordinary corporation conducts its affairs, would they not have some policy with regard to expenditures of this kind? Would they not be able to announce to the public, as private corporations do to their shareholders, some policy regulating these matters? But no, my hon. friend fails to do this. He frankly confesses that the government has no policy and simply confesses that the government puts up these public buildings wherever they think the expenditure will do political good. In all seriousness, apart from party politics, I think the government should announce some policy. They are not spending their own money but that of the people, and they are spending it as trustees of the people, and certainly it does not seem at all satisfactory in the public interest that they should spend that money for the reasons given by the Minister of Public Works to-night.

Mr. THOMPSON (Haldimand and Monek). I come from a town which I consider a very good one indeed, but which certainly has not the population which the hon. gentleman would consider entitled it to a public building. It has a population in the neighbourhood of one thousand, but some few years ago, in the days of the late government, there was expended there the sum of \$14,000 public money in the erection of a post office. On that occasion no request was made to the town to supply a site free of expense. The government in those days did not act on that line and should not to-day. If the government require a lot for a public building, they should pay for it and not encourage the bonus system of putting up buildings in towns which gave a bonus in order to obtain them. I may say that that post office has given satisfaction to the people of the town and that no caretaker has been required for it, which rather contradicts the anticipation of an hon. member opposite that the post office in Alexandria would necessitate a caretaker at a cost of \$400 per annum to the people. As representing a rural constituency, I heartily agree with my hon. friend from South Simcoe (Mr. Lennox). His case and mine are very much similar. We have no very large towns in our constituencies, but is that any reason why all the expenditure of public money should be made in the cities and large towns and none in those constituencies which do not enjoy such large centres. The city from which my hon. friend the leader of the opposition comes—the most excellent city of Halifax—had an expenditure, in the days of the late government, of I believe \$350,000 on a drill

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax).

shed alone. I am not going into the argument as to the utility of expending so large a sum in that connection, but merely wish to point out that our large cities have been given, at the public expense, extremely fine public buildings and should not object to small places getting a far less share of the public money. Besides we should not consider merely the population of the town alone, but also take into consideration the fact that it is a center of a district, and the whole population of that district ought to be taken into account. We are asked by the hon. leader of the opposition to apply the same principles as would be applied by a private business corporation, but we know very well that we cannot apply those principles to the same extent in administration of public affairs. These public buildings are not only intended for the transaction of public business but also to beautify the localities in which they are built.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). Now my hon. friend the Minister of Public Works has got a principle and a policy laid down for him, and that is the policy of beautifying the different localities. I think on the whole that that is a superior policy to the one announced by the hon. minister. I am glad at all events to commend it to the Minister of Public Works for what it is worth. But I was not making any distinction between cities, towns and villages, but was simply pointing out the necessity of our having a policy in this matter. According to the very frank statement of the Minister of Public Works it is not the public interests which governs, but political exigencies, and these public buildings are not erected on any settled policy at all, but simply as they are necessitated by political pressure. I am quite willing that my remarks should apply to Halifax or any other place just as much as to any town or village in this country, and I should think that would be evident to any hon. gentleman who listened to what I said.

Mr. SPROULE. If the hon. member for Haldimand (Mr. Thompson) would look up ancient history and see how long this House was held up by the opposition of that day, when the late government brought down a proposal to spend money on the erection of a post office at Cayuga, he perhaps would be convinced that he was rather rash in his remarks and rushed in where angels fear to tread. No people could possibly have condemned the government in stronger or more vehement language than his friends did for the building of that very post office, and now he comes forward and offers that as a defence of the conduct of the present government for doing likewise. If it was wrong in one case, it must be wrong in the other, and in proportion as the hon. gentleman commends it now he condemns the conduct of his friends in the past. He must be careful to inform himself of the history