

Supply—Public Works

wagons that could not get on that ferry, because I got a lot of information about good roads, and road building, and traffic, and I understood there were very few wagons or trucks that could not get on that ferry to return to Tormentine from Borden.

As to improving tourist traffic on the island, I hope they are able to do so, because it is a lovely spot and the people are fine people; and many of them were very disappointed at the ingratitude the island showed to the Conservative party at the last election.

The ferry from Tormentine to Borden covers a long distance and it is difficult and most expensive to keep it operating in the winter-time. I think Prince Edward Island has been treated very well by the dominion, and I doubt very much if this proposed expenditure is wise; in fact, my own view is that once you have built a landing place for this ferry, they will come back next year and ask for the ferry itself. So I advise the minister to be careful and not start it.

Mr. HEAPS: Before this item carries I should like to say a word or two, because a year or two ago when I discussed in committee the extent of the deficit on the ferry, I was dubbed reactionary by certain hon. members from Prince Edward Island; yet all I had done was to seek a little information. Anybody who asks any question about expenditures in Prince Edward Island is looked upon as an enemy of the island, although I am just as much interested in helping the people of that province as I am in the well-being of any part of Canada. At the same time there is no minister, present or past, of public works who can say that at any time I ever requested one cent of public expenditure for any sort of public works in this country. I do not believe in that kind of politics, nor do I go around looking for a little patronage for my own constituency. When public works are to be carried out, I want them to be only such as are necessary and to the public advantage, not primarily for political purposes.

Personally I do not believe that the minister could honestly inform this committee that the purpose contemplated under this item is worth the amount which it is proposed to vote. The minister has no information which he can give to this committee other than the fact that the provincial government have asked for this public work. Is the government going to adopt the policy of acquiescing in any expenditure for which a provincial government asks? I do not think they would; I do not think they could. If a request is received from a provincial government for the construction of certain public works, the

[Mr. Spence.]

first thing that ought to be done by the Department of Public Works is to undertake a complete and exhaustive inquiry into the subject matter of the application, and then judge it on its merits. That has not been done in this particular case and I think it ought to be one of the first things the Department of Public Works should see to.

Evidently this is what has happened. The provincial legislature has requested certain public works to be constructed there, and no doubt the members from Prince Edward Island have been to see the minister and have impressed upon him the necessity of going ahead. I believe the Minister of Finance represents that particular district, and I have no doubt he has a good deal of weight with the Minister of Public Works. In justice to the finances of the country and to the people of Canada, the minister ought to give us more definite reasons why these works should be proceeded with. He has not convinced me at any rate of the necessity of spending this money, more than a quarter of a million, in that part of the island on something that is going to be of doubtful benefit, something at any rate that will not be commensurate with the expenditure.

Will the minister tell us whether a survey has been made, and how many people are likely to use the ferry? How many tourists were in this part of the island in the last two years, and how many are likely to avail themselves of the ferry when it is in operation? These are questions with regard to which the minister has not given us any information, and I feel that until he is in a position to explain fully the reasons for this expenditure he ought to leave the matter in abeyance.

Mr. CARDIN: The engineer has reported that a population of 25,000 will be affected by the proposed ferry service.

Mr. BENNETT: Affected by it?

Mr. CARDIN: It has been carefully estimated that the section of Prince Edward Island directly affected by the proposed ferry service has a population of 25,000, and there is an additional 20,000 very closely concerned. The whole province will benefit indirectly; that is what the district engineer says in his report. The probable value of the commercial traffic is estimated at \$256,000 made up as follows: inward—coal, 10,000 tons, \$65,000; general merchandise, \$25,000; outward—live stock, \$14,000; farm produce, roots, \$10,000; dairy and poultry products, \$20,000; hay and oats, \$28,000; mixed fertilizer, \$20,000; mis-