

Supply—Justice

building has to be done within the institutions, in addition to which we have very special problems in connection with the maintenance and repair of our institutions which necessitate keeping our own engineering and architectural branch.

For that reason it was not considered feasible or desirable or economic to have this building done by public works, but I may tell the hon. gentleman now as a matter of general information that when I was Acting Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and I realized that there was a very substantial building program being undertaken in connection with Indian schools, it was my feeling that it would be a mistake for us to duplicate or attempt to duplicate the organization of the Department of Public Works. I discussed this with the officials and they were of the same view, and we instituted discussions with the Department of Public Works with a view to that department undertaking a closer management of our building operations.

Mr. Pickersgill: The Minister of Justice is completely mistaken. If he will look at the files of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration he will find that shortly after I became minister, Mr. Winters and I instituted a study as a result of which these buildings were transferred to the full limit that the Department of Public Works was willing to undertake in each successive year. The suggestion was made by Mr. Winters, but I was in full accord with his view that as rapidly as possible we should dismantle the whole construction branch of Indian affairs except for those minor repairs and minor projects which obviously it would be a waste of time for the staff of the Department of Public Works to deal with because they could so often be done by Indian superintendents. So the accolade which the hon. gentleman gave himself is totally undeserved. If he made any change at all he was simply carrying on the policy which was going on just as fast as public works could digest it, two years before.

Mr. Fulton: Then not much progress had been made.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The answer the minister gave is certainly not satisfactory. When hon. gentlemen opposite were on this side of the house they complained about the division of responsibility and the confusion of responsibility for the construction of public buildings entrusted to so many departments of government. I well remember this question being raised on my own estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare, though I cannot recall whether or not the Minister of Justice participated in that debate. Fortunately I was in the position of being able to say that with regard to construction

in that department, the departmental program was being carried out by the Department of Public Works.

That was the occasion of a strong and spirited debate entered into by some hon. members who urged the centralization under one department, the Department of Public Works, of responsibility for the whole of the government's building program. But the minister in answer to the indictment levelled at him this morning by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate did not provide an adequate explanation. What justification can there be for the Department of Justice carrying on a complete duplication of the activities of the Department of Public Works with regard to its properties?

I can well understand that in view of the desirability of having prisoners carry on certain work as part of their training, as well as serving other purposes connected with the status of prisoners, some occupation, possibly connected with building, might be found for them; but surely prisoners are not called upon to build penitentiaries. I can understand prisoners lodged, say at Kingston, constructing benches and cupboards or pigsties, but to assign to the prison population projects such as constructing big additions to such institutions as St. Vincent de Paul is, of course, perfectly ridiculous. The minister has not answered the charge made by his own colleagues on another occasion and in another capacity and from another place in this house, and if those arguments were valid two years ago they are no less valid, surely, in the judgment of hon. gentlemen opposite today.

The Department of Public Works should increasingly be entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the construction requirements of all departments of the government just as, for instance, the Department of National Health and Welfare is now being increasingly assigned health responsibilities of all departments. The minister ought surely to give us a more satisfactory reason for the policy of decentralization practised by the Department of Justice as well as by other departments of the government. The minister is, I think, a member of treasury board—

Mr. Fulton: You are quite wrong, as usual.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The hon. gentleman says I am quite wrong. I had hoped he would have had the opportunity of acquiring that additional experience in the conduct of the government of Canada. I hope before he ceases to be a minister he will be appointed to treasury board because he would find it a useful experience, an experience which if he had profited by it would not have allowed him to make the rather weak defence he did make a few moments ago in answer