

ber for Cornwall and Stormont (Mr. Pringle) what the policy of the government is in regard to this matter. To say the least of it, it is not a businesslike way in the expenditure of public money, to select a little town here and there over the country and to spend \$17,000 or \$20,000 for a post office in it. If it is a good policy for the town of Alexandria in the public interest of Canada, it is a good policy I suppose for every other town of like importance. I have urged upon the government during the past two sessions that some definite principle should be laid down with regard to public works of this character. It is only right that the minister should state what the policy of the government is. Is it the policy of the government that in towns of this size there shall be a public building costing \$17,000 or \$20,000 for a post office alone. If it is not the policy of the government, why is an exception made in this case? If it is the policy of the government, why is that policy not carried out in regard to other towns?

THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS.

I can remember that for a great many years when in opposition we demanded from the Conservative government to know their policy with regard to the erection of public buildings. Probably, in some cases we are not as careful as we might be to avoid following the example of our predecessors in office. I said last night that if we went into this policy of erecting public buildings at all, the principle town in each of the counties has a very strong claim. You can look at the records since confederation and you will find that previous governments have erected public buildings in towns which would compare very unfavourably with the town of Alexandria. There may be something in what my hon. friend from Dundas (Mr. Broder) says, that the government is perhaps everywhere saving large expenditures of money by stopping what they consider to be unnecessary works in the public interest, and spending a very small amount instead. With regard to the policy of the government at the present time, I am not in a position to announce any particular change. Each application will no doubt be considered upon its merits. Previous governments having erected public buildings all through the various provinces, those places which have not had a public building feel very much aggrieved at what they call the injustice done them in comparison with other places. That rule applies whether they are supporters of the government or not. My hon. friend from South Simcoe (Mr. Lennox) says there is only one thing the government could spend money on in his constituency and therefore he wants a post office. That being the case in many rural constituencies they would appreciate very much if a nice public building were erected in the county town which they take so much pride in. I live in a rural consti-

tuency and in the chief town of my county we had a very strong claim for a public building. In that town the revenue derived justified the erection of a public building, but although demands were made it was always refused by the hon. gentleman from Halifax (Mr. Borden) and his friends when they were in power. I am quite willing to admit that there is great difficulty in satisfying the country with regard to any policy on this matter. My hon. friend from Halifax (Mr. Borden) has the great honour of living in a large city and we expend hundreds of thousands of dollars, I might almost say millions of dollars on public buildings in that city. We are asking now for a vote of \$250,000 for a public building in his city and it will cost a good deal more than that before it is ready for occupation. Those of us who represent rural constituencies like my hon. friend from South Simcoe (Mr. Lennox) and myself find that our people are not altogether well satisfied that all these large expenditures should be made in the city constituencies. Whether that is defensible or not from every standpoint, the fact remains that every member in this House from a rural constituency, be he Liberal or Conservative, knows that his friends do take that view, and they look for some recognition of this kind. This is one of the largest places in the constituency. It is an old established, growing and prosperous place. And the people feel that in view of what has taken place elsewhere, they are entitled to a public building. The cost of the building will be kept within the amount of the appropriation. It is not my intention to ask for a further vote to complete this work.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). I hope that my hon. friend did not seriously put forward the proposition that because some previous government made appropriations which might not be defended, that is any reply for him on this occasion.

THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. There is a good deal of human nature in man.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). My hon. friend's statement of the policy of the government is a frank statement that they have no policy at all beyond political exigencies. They have no policy except to erect public buildings wherever they are demanded by political exigencies. That is a very frank statement on the part of my hon. friend. If his explanation means anything at all it means that whenever political pressure is brought on the government, the government will take that into consideration and expend public money provided the pressure be only strong enough. I do not think that that is after all a very high standard of public administration. I do not know that my hon. friend would so regard it himself. I am not criticising him personally, but the policy and