

Supply—Public Works

the provinces will be pleased to co-operate in the establishment of a good wharf for this ferry service. That does not mean that we will not make some contribution. I suppose when the province is ready to do the work we shall make a contribution.

My information is that to date we are negotiating, and we are asking for this amount to pay our share of this work. As we look forward to the development of that new province I shall do my utmost to see that these negotiations reach a happy conclusion for the benefit of all. I am sure the hon. member would not want to draw me into some discussions which have taken place about Portugal Cove, or other places. He will realize that I have enough troubles.

I cannot add much to what has been said. The Department of Public Works does not keep in mind what Mr. So and So says politically in his province. We try to handle these matters for the good of the public, and in the public interest. That is our motto in the department—and without any public relations officers to do it, either.

Mr. Higgins: Perhaps we have not been here long enough to become familiar with the routine. I am only asking if it is a fact that if I, as an opposition member, make a request of the minister, it will be acceded to only if it is approved by the cabinet representative from Newfoundland.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Oh, that is not the way I proceed. When I receive a request from the hon. member, or from any other hon. member opposite, I ask for reports from my officials. They are my close advisers, and they have quite a bit of knowledge in these matters. I get reports from them, and if I come to a decision I have to submit the matter to my colleagues if it is to be put in the estimates.

Mr. Brooks: There is where the catch is.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): When I am convinced that it is really something that should be done I put up a good fight with my colleagues to help to carry the day. That helps the person who made the request, the mayor of a town or any member who has a request to make. They know they are always welcome in my department. I do not know of any member who would stand up in the house and say that he had not received a cordial reception and had not obtained results in my department. That happens to be the case for all hon. members.

If you will give me a moment there is one project in which I am very much interested, the Pembroke bridge between the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. I happen to live

[Mr. Fournier (Hull).]

in the district, and we have been working on it for years. We have almost come to an agreement with the province of Ontario. Not long ago I received a letter from the premier of Ontario stating that if we would draft an agreement they would be ready to put up the approaches on the Ontario side and the first span of the bridge from the mainland to the island. We would undertake the bridge between the two islands. I am expecting an answer to letters I have written to the other government involved. If I get a favourable answer from that other government we will sign the agreement and proceed with the work. That is probably what the hon. gentleman wanted to know. Never be bashful or shy with the Minister of Public Works if you think you are justified in making a request. You will always be well received, but do not ask me to do everything in the same year. I cannot.

Mr. Higgins: I do not think I can be accused of being bashful or shy. I have been asking for this project for nearly four years, and it is somewhat of a coincidence that it should be done this year and that this statement should be made. I certainly want to be sure that the wharf will be built.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): You are not sure that it is to be done right away. You do not mean you think it is going to be done right now.

Mr. Higgins: If the minister says he will do it, he will do it.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): I will do it if I come to an agreement. I have a certain amount of money at my disposal, but we do not rush into these things with closed eyes. When we make a deal with somebody we know what we are doing.

Mr. Higgins: May I ask the question once again. I do not want to upset the minister because he is the essence of good humour tonight, but following the explanation he has given me I am not quite certain yet whether Premier Smallwood is or is not correct. Would you say he is or is not? That is all I am asking.

An hon. Member: Oh, no.

Mr. Higgins: Oh, yes. I think it is a fair question.

Mr. Fournier (Hull): Do not ask me to explain the actions of everybody who has business with the Department of Public Works. I can explain my own actions to my satisfaction and probably to yours, but I cannot undertake to explain other people's. Do you know that there are people in this country interested in public works who know more about the job than I or my whole staff