

Supply—Public Works

I took this up with the then minister of public works and he told me that this had indeed been the policy, that it was not necessarily union firms which received these cleaning contracts. I would like to impress upon the minister that in awarding contracts to cleaning and other firms a policy should be adopted of dealing strictly with union firms, because it seems to me to be improper for the federal government to set such a poor example of dealing with non-union firms in awarding these contracts.

There are a number of other matters that I would like to raise but I think I had better confine myself to these three specific points. The first question is, what are the major works planned by the minister as a substitute for the winter works program which will be adequate to handle this problem, one which is always complicated in the sea of unemployment.

● (9:50 p.m.)

The second matter is Roberts Bank. How is the division of facilities going to be made between the federal and provincial authorities and what facilities has the federal government clear authority to build? The third question is this: Will the government consider revising its policy to one of dealing strictly with union firms in awarding cleaning and other contracts in public buildings?

Mr. McGrath: I listened with interest to the minister's statement, Mr. Chairman. I was rather intrigued by his suggestion that members of parliament could refer their requests for various constituency public works projects to the regional head offices. Perhaps he may be able to report on this, because in our particular case I understand that the Newfoundland regional head office is located in Halifax. In many instances I would suggest—and certainly it has been our experience in other areas when we have regional head offices located in the maritime provinces—that they are not fully conversant with the peculiar problems of the province of Newfoundland. I understand that perhaps the minister was referring to what could be considered miscellaneous public works, that is works under a value of \$50,000.

I share with other hon. members a certain amount of disappointment over the fact that the estimates have not been referred to the committee. There are a number of questions of a detailed nature which we would like to direct to the officials of the department, and naturally many of us are reluctant to take up

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

the time of the committee with probing questions of a detailed nature. The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate referred to the vote under harbours, rivers and engineering services and compared that to the vote last year for Newfoundland. He referred to the substantial reduction. I should like to hear the minister comment on this reduction, because I think our problems in this particular area of public works, which is so important to Newfoundland, far from diminishing are increasing yearly. If anything, we would have expected the estimates under this particular vote, which as I have said is so important to Newfoundland, would have increased substantially. It is interesting to note the comparison of this vote under harbours, rivers and engineering services with the New Brunswick vote.

Even though it, too, has been reduced as compared with last year, nevertheless it is still in excess of the vote for Newfoundland. I do not feel it is unfair of me to point out that in Newfoundland our problems are much more substantial, much more numerous. We have many more harbours, many more marine facilities because of the vast coastline of the province of Newfoundland, taking in as it does the coast of Labrador.

In connection with these estimates, Mr. Chairman, I should like to refer briefly to the St. John's harbour development. I note that the vote for this year for St. John's harbour is merely \$100,000. I should like to know, for example, what this covers because we have been hearing now for a number of years suggestions that the Department of Public Works of the government of Canada would be extending the St. John's harbour development to include the eastern end of the harbour. Since some of the harbour development has been completed, there has been a quite unexpected increase in the amount of traffic flowing into the harbour of St. John's. Obviously, this is a direct result of the improved facilities that we now have in that very important port. For example, I should like the minister to tell us if there are plans to proceed with the extension of St. John's harbour. We had hoped there would be some word in this particular direction this year because, as I say, the need is great and is growing steadily.

In so far as accommodation is concerned, I should like to endorse the comments of the hon. member for Cochrane. I, too, am of the opinion that members of parliament, in constituencies where there are public buildings,