

given for departing from the policy hitherto adopted in this matter. It was, as the hon. Minister of Public Works has stated, the policy of the late Government, and I think it was the policy when the hon. gentleman occupied the position of Minister of Public Works before—that is, practically since Confederation. Whatever has been done in the way of maintenance and repair of these military buildings has been done by the Department of Public Works. I am not going to charge or to insinuate anything against the expenditure of the Militia Department, but I will say that I do not expect that money will be saved by this plan. I believe that more money will be expended. We see it at once. There was a proposal in the Estimates for an architect. That was struck out, but we were shown that it was merely temporary, because Col. Hewitt who had hardly time to give his services, as he and his officers were already too hard-worked, would undertake the duties. But there were also two additions to the vote which passed through Committee the other evening on account of this matter. Now I do not think it can be reasonably contended that the public interest would be served by splitting up the business of the repairs and maintenance of this particular class of buildings. The Public Works Department is charged with the repairs and maintenance of all other public buildings; any speciality there may be in the repairs and maintenance of fortifications—in so far as it is a special thing in construction—is sufficiently indicated by the original construction, and to keep them good one looks at what has been done. But if there is to be any speciality, even in the repairs, it will be as easy for the Department of Public Works to obtain that scientific information from Col. Hewitt, or from whatever person who may be looked upon as the adviser of the Government in that regard, as it is for the Militia Department to obtain that information; but that special scientific information being obtained the practical carrying out of it by the draughtsmen, by the framing of the contract, or by the supervision of the work, will not only be done as well but will probably be done better by that large staff employed in the business of maintaining and repairing public works, than it would be done as an extra or incident of the Department of Militia and Defence. It is a vicious division of labour, not a real division, as it is when work of the same class is performed by the same persons, and this is work of the same class which is not to be performed by the same persons, namely, by persons of the Department of Public Works, but is to be taken away from them and given to a separate staff connected with the Department of Militia and Defence. You will find persons who have the same work to do in the construction of buildings of this particular class, persons who have only to do with contracts in respect to these particular contracts, persons who have only to do with the supervision of works, in respect to these particular works, and these works will be better attended to if they were attended to by persons whose business was of this class, that is, persons who are officers of the Department of Public Works. We find already a swelling of the items of Militia and Defence due to this change, and I do not observe that it is proposed in consequence of this change to reduce the estimates of the Department of Public Works. We will find the expenditure of that Department increased rather than diminished in consequence of the change in the mode in which it is proposed to carry on this work.

Mr. CARON. I cannot agree with the views just expressed by the hon. gentleman. If the hon. gentleman will refer to the reports of the Department of Militia and Defence for the last seven years he will see that the general officers commanding the Militia force, as well as other officers belonging to the force, have made representations to the Department expressing their opinion that works of a military character should be performed under the super-

Mr. BLAKE.

vision of a military engineer who would be in a better position and undertake to keep up the repairs of these very important and very valuable defensive works, which would otherwise have to be done by the Department of Public Works. The hon. gentleman knows that along the sea-coast and in several other portions of the Dominion we have batteries of the class of defensive works which are very important. Now I will not go beyond what my hon. friend from East York has looked upon as my duty; I will not go beyond the duty of commanding armies, to express an opinion about works which he, as the late Minister of Public Works, may possibly suppose that he knows more about than I do myself, but I will do as he has probably done invariably in his own Department—I will express the views of practical men upon practical questions. I have the opinions of military officers not only belonging to the Militia force of Canada, but also belonging to the Imperial service, who have sent in reports to the Department complaining of the manner in which these defensive works have been repaired. For instance, there is one battery near Halifax the earth-works of which was removed by the employés of the Public Works Department and, though I do not myself attach any blame to them for it, on account of their being unacquainted with the particular nature of those works they removed a portion which was really the most essential part of that battery. Under those circumstances the hon. gentleman must admit that in view of these reports the Government are justified in making the experiment. I need not say so far as the Minister of Public Works is concerned that we all know how very efficiently he presides over that important Department; and that hon. gentleman coincides altogether in the views which are entertained by the Government upon that question, and in the reports which have been sent in regarding it. I believe I am safe in saying that he is also convinced that the change that is now proposed will be in the public interest. When the Estimates come down I am certain the hon. gentleman will give me credit for the very small increase which is added to the expenditure of the Department of Militia under that head, and I think the change is one that will give satisfaction to the public as well as to the Department of Militia and Department of Public Works.

Mr. MACKENZIE. Where was the Battery the hon. gentleman referred to?

Mr. CARON. The Battery was near Halifax, but I cannot now recall the name. I can hand the reports to the hon. gentleman, in which he can obtain the information.

Mr. MACKENZIE. I have no recollection of any earth battery being undertaken by the Department of Public Works at all.

Mr. CARON. I did not say it was during the time the hon. gentleman presided over the Department; I said the repairs had been carried out by the Public Works Department, and I think it is since the hon. gentleman gave up the control of that Department.

Mr. MILLS. It seems to me that this is an unwise departure from the former system prevailing in this country. There is no doubt whatever that the moment a new branch in any Department is made, it will undertake to justify its existence by endeavouring to point out how very important it is in the public interest. If we were involved in war with any country and important military works were required, I can understand how it would be necessary to separate works of that kind from the Department of Public Works. But, Sir, under existing circumstances I can see no propriety in this provision. We know that military men have not the same notions of economy in connection with public works that we civilians have, and that if this branch is transferred to the Department of Militia, a military gentleman will be appointed to take charge of it, a military