

tion to ask them. I think the hon. Minister of Public Works is quite capable of saying upon what principle the government are acting. It is a pleasure to go into matters with him because he so good-natured and I think he should allow his good nature to manifest itself to explain to the country, not to the opposition, upon what principle they are acting. Are you going to spend an amount of money proportionate to the size of the town, the village, or the city in which you are putting up these public buildings or are you going to take note of the important demands made by the hon. member for West York (Mr. Campbell) and which is being made by the farmers throughout the province of Ontario very largely for a rural postal delivery? Take the expenditure of \$17,000 that you are making in Alexandria—the interest upon that sum alone will go a long way towards supplying the farmers of my hon. friend's constituency with a postal delivery to say nothing of the convenience it would be to them at the same time. It is, I know, a new departure, but the government have been making a great many new departures. When they were in opposition they took one course, now that they are in power, now that they are able to dispense patronage and now that they are in receipt of handsome salaries as ministers they are taking another course. We are anxious, we on this side of the House to know on what principle this expenditure is based, because we wish to see that the principle is applied in every case fairly and equitably. If the Minister of Public Works will to-night commit the government or commit himself to a principle, we will be prepared to let estimates of this kind through not only this session but other sessions without very much criticism, because we are not so anxious to criticise the particular items as we are the principle of the thing. The hon. member for Haldimand (Mr. Thompson) has characterized the action of the minister pretty strongly, and therefore he ought in duty not only to the country, but to his own friends, give an explanation. I am sorry to see so few of the gentlemen on the back benches coming to the assistance of the Minister of Public Works, or any other minister for that matter. They seem to have entrusted the affairs of their constituents to the members of the cabinet, when in the best interest of their people they ought to look after those interests themselves. Last night my hon. friend (Mr. Boyd) had to draw the attention of the government to grievances in Manitoba and the North-west. There was not a Liberal member from the west to speak for that great and growing country, and it had to be done by a Conservative member. I am endeavouring to relieve the members of the government to some extent from a very unpleasant and very difficult duty, for if it is a very difficult duty for the Minister of

Public Works it must be doubly so for other members of the government who have not that versified knowledge of general affairs that he has. Some of his supporters behind him are voluble enough at times, and I do not see why they should be silent now and allow money to be expended without a word of explanation and without being able to report to their constituents upon what principle the government is acting.

THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Brock) asked a pertinent question as to whether the people of Bowmanville, in the county of Durham, requested this expenditure to be made. My hon. friend (Mr. Brock) seems very much opposed to expenditures of this kind, but I may tell him that this matter was as urgently pressed upon the government by the people of Bowmanville as was another expenditure pressed by two deputations from the city of Toronto, and it is my opinion that the Bowmanville expenditure is every bit as defensible as the other. I was pleased to give my support to the expenditure in Toronto although I had some little doubt, still I thought it was for the national benefit.

Mr. CLARKE. What was that expenditure for?

THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. That Fair of yours.

Mr. CLARKE. The Dominion Exhibition, was it not?

THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Yes. I would like the hon. gentleman (Mr. Brock) to remember that the Conservative government put an item in the estimates for a building in Bowmanville, and I think we are justified in following that example when we see that in this old prosperous and rich county of Durham the comparatively small town of Bowmanville gives us a revenue of \$15,000 a year.

Mr. SPROULE. It is \$4,500 if the Postmaster General is right.

THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. This building will be for Customs, Inland Revenue and Post Office and the total revenue is over \$15,000. I think the expenditure for a small public building in a town like that is perfectly justifiable on public grounds and I believe that the people of Bowmanville had a very strong claim upon this government as it had on the Conservative government who put an item in the estimates for this work.

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). What is the total cost?

THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. \$10,000 or \$12,000.

Mr. HUGHES (Victoria). But you vote \$10,000 this year and \$5,000 last year.