

Supply—Public Works

of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

[Translation]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, while we are dealing with the estimates of the Department of Public Works, I would blame myself if I did not point out to the minister how essential it is not to spend all his budget in some ridings which seem favoured by the government, at the expense of other ridings.

For instance, in my own riding, for a long time we have been asking for repairs to the post-office or for a new building, and it is precisely the Department of Public Works which should look after that. A few years ago, the old post office in Rouyn was repaired and an annex was added which, strangely enough, looks a lot like any hen-house we can see many in various parts of the country. A hen-house which is called the post office, right in the middle of the town of Rouyn, is certainly not very aesthetic.

When I mentioned the fact to the minister—not this minister but the previous Conservative minister—everyone wondered what had happened. Did the government architects lack judgment or did the government not know who to hire as a qualified architect to draw the plans so that our post office would look like one.

We still have that post office in the city of Rouyn which is in the last analysis the metropolis of northwestern Quebec. Beautiful post offices were built in Noranda, Val-d'Or, Malartic. But in Rouyn, it seemed good enough to build an addition to the existing post office dating back to 1928, I think, and it is a sorry sight as far as public buildings are concerned.

Many requests have been made over the years to the present Minister of Public Works and to his predecessors. For instance, there is in Notre-Dame-du-Nord an old bridge which must date back to the time when the Oblate Fathers were living in the old fort at Ville-Marie and there were only vehicles drawn by animals. In those days two ox-drawn carts could meet on that bridge but today, it would be nice if two cars could do the same, but it is rather difficult. Quite often, one car has to wait until the other has crossed the bridge, which is rather a long one. Such a state of affairs in 1968, in a region like Témiscamingue, does not make drivers very happy. Even if those who use horses or oxen today can quite easily cross that bridge, cars and

especially trucks have a hard time getting across.

I am told that the department is trying to negotiate the sale of that bridge to the provincial authorities. I cannot recall for how many years there has been talk of that alleged intention of selling the bridge at Notre-Dame-du-Nord to the provincial authorities, but it belongs to the federal government at the present time. We have been waiting to hear about it for a long time. I understand that the budgets are not generous enough to allow the Minister of Public Works to authorize such constructions at the present time, but a start must be made. People have been asking for a new bridge at Notre-Dame-du-Nord for over 10, 15 or 20 years and the money has never been found to build one. Even when the riding was represented by a Liberal member, under a Liberal government, or by a Conservative member, under a Conservative Government, no way was found to improve that situation.

There is another problem, which is serious enough for the farmers of Témiscamingue: Lake Témiscamingue, one of the most beautiful lakes in Canada, is eroding its shores. For years now the government has been asked to build retaining walls to keep the waters from eroding the land of farmers who have been settled along the shores for several years. There again, we are told that the budget does not allow it. Still, during the election campaign, some time in May, a Mr. Bédard, a civil servant of the Department of Public Works, went over to grant small contracts in the riding of Témiscamingue to repair the wharves or, for instance, to put up \$125 or \$150's worth of rubber along a ramp. An amount of \$125, \$150 or \$200 was spent per parish and people were told: See how generous the government is towards the people in these parishes.

They were given suckers just like that, at a cost of \$125, to the extent where some contractor in a small parish came to see me at one point with a paper signed by Mr. Bédard authorizing him to do \$225 worth of work. He said: The government does not want to pay me right away. You know, Mr. Caouette, I am a Liberal but could you not help me to get an advance of \$225 from the bank at Rouyn? I then told him: Go to the Imperial Bank of Commerce in Rouyn tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock with your little paper signed by Mr. Bédard, and the manager will probably lend you the \$225. If he refuses, tell him to call me. When the man told the bank manager to