

These buildings have not been distributed without regard to the colour of the constituency in which they were located. I believe that it devolves upon us as a duty to carry out the will of the House expressed in that resolution by, as far as possible, equalizing the distribution of the public buildings within the limits expressed in that resolution itself. It is a very great question whether it is the best economy in one case or another to have a public building rather than a rented one. My own opinion is that, in a great many places, a public building—it does not necessarily involve a caretaker and so on, as my hon. friend from East Grey said it did—may be a more economical arrangement and more favourable to the public interest. It is always easier to make a building convenient for the public when it has been built with a special view to accommodate the public. It is not always easy to rent a building that affords this convenience. And I believe there is just as apt to be jobbery in the way of renting a building from political friends as in putting up a public building when it is required. With all these considerations in view, with the broad fact before us that half the country has been defaulted of its necessary public buildings, notwithstanding the resolution of this House, by these gentlemen who have lately left office, I am not at all prepared to take the stand that we should be extremely critical in regard to the matter of the construction of public buildings by the present Government. If I did, in one or two cases, question their judgment in regard to this matter, I should hesitate a long time before I declared want of confidence in the Government or did anything to weaken their position by supporting a motion of this kind. I should give them the benefit of any doubt there may be in my mind as to the wisdom of the decision, and should, as I intend to do if this motion should come to a division, vote against any motion which implies want of confidence in their honesty of intention, or in the soundness of their judgment.

Mr. SOMERVILLE. I just wish to say that I do not support the motion which has been made by the hon. member for North Wellington (Mr. McMullen) on account of any approbation that I may receive from my hon. friends on the other side of the House, as has been promised by the hon. member for East York (Mr. Maclean). I think every member of this House ought to have sufficient independence to vote for the same principles when he is supporting a Government as he did when he was in Opposition; and if my course does not meet with the approbation of the Government, I cannot help it. I sat on the other side of the House for fourteen sessions in Opposition, and every time these votes came up for post offices in all parts of the Dominion, it was the unanimous opinion of the Liberal party, led on by its leaders, and by the men who occupy prominent posi-

tions on the Government benches, that this policy should not be endorsed or supported by the people's representatives in this House. I for one am not prepared to swallow the principles or my words which I uttered in Opposition to the Government of the day at that time, in spending public money in this way; and although I am a warm supporter of the present Government, still I am not prepared to go the length of saying that I shall support everything they do, even though they do things which are contrary to the well-understood principles and practices of the Liberal party. That is the position that I take in regard to this matter. I say that there is no justification whatever, there can be no justification, for the expenditure of public money in erecting these post offices in small villages or towns, even though they may be shire towns, as mentioned in these Estimates. I say that in the province of Ontario there is not a riding where we cannot pick out three, or four, or five, sometimes ten or a dozen, towns which are just as important and far more important than the towns which are mentioned in this resolution. Therefore, I am bound to support the resolution moved by the hon. member for North Wellington.

Mr. SCRIVER. With regard to this question I have merely to say that I sympathize very strongly with the views that have been expressed by the hon. gentleman (Mr. Somerville) who has just taken his seat. If there was one subject upon which I felt strongly in the old days when our friends on the Opposition benches were bringing forward almost, every session, votes for public buildings in many instances in very small places, it was this very subject, and both by act and by word I have strongly opposed the granting of sums for erecting public buildings in comparatively small places. I remember particularly the case of a public building at a place called Laprairie, in the that part of the country where I live, a small village, the post office revenue of which was only four or five hundred dollars. I felt it was an abuse which could in no way be defended; and I remember raising my voice against the appropriation. Well, now because our opponents did wrong in the past in these matters, I consider is no reason why we should follow their example; indeed I think we are bound to take a better course, not only in regard to this matter, but in regard to a great many others. The vote in this particular case is for erecting a public building in what we would call in the province of Quebec, a village, or a small town, and where it has not been shown by any words uttered by the Finance Minister or by those who have followed him in support of this course, that a public building is needed. I believe with the hon. member for Grey (Mr. Sproule) that the erection of a public building will be followed by other outlays; in almost every instance, at all events, the services of