

draw the line, and when they come and say to this House that a building is not going to cost more than a certain sum their officers should be instructed to make an estimate within that amount. That was the tenor of the discussion which took place two years ago when this building was first spoken of and it was the distinct understanding at that time that the engineer should get his instructions that the building should be erected and completed for a sum not to exceed \$100,000. Who is responsible for this over-expenditure? Is it the minister, or is it the department, or is it the chief engineer, or some other official of the government? I say that the time has come when we should protest and I intend to protest against it in every instance when the officials of any department undertake to spend the money of this country and compel parliament to vote it. If we are to be responsible for the expenditure of money then I say let us have the fixing of the amount and not the officials of the government as has been the practice year after year. I enter this protest and I intend to repeat it in every case where the same thing occurs. So long as the minister has assumed the responsibility himself and has the responsibility I have not much to say, but when I know, as in this case, it is the officials of the department and not the minister, then I say, we ought to enter a strong protest against it and see that a stop is put to it.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Mr. Chairman, I may say that I am in full sympathy with the position taken by the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Henderson). I hope he will not have on many occasions to protest as far as I am concerned. In this particular case I am satisfied that the minister was perfectly frank and candid in his figures as to the cost. So that no member of the committee would have reason to complain when asking for this vote for \$60,000. I requested the chief architect to make a complete estimate so far as possible so that I might announce to the committee what the entire cost of this building will be. My hon. friend knows that it has been the practice to ask for a vote for a portion of the money required and then to come back to parliament and get more to complete the work. It is not my intention to do that in this case so far as I can avoid it. It is my intention to do what the hon. member suggests; that is to ask the engineer, or the architect of the department to give me a carefully prepared estimate and to announce this to the House. I can quite understand that in many of these cases it is unnecessary to vote the full amount of the money required in one session for the simple reason that we all know and well know that it sometimes takes two or three years, even when reasonable progress is made by the contractor, to complete the work. But, I agree with the

Mr. HENDERSON.

hon. gentleman that if there is one thing that parliament is entitled to, it is that when work is undertaken a fair, and straightforward estimate of the total cost should be given. So far as I am concerned I intend to carry out that policy.

Mr. HENDERSON. I am obliged, indeed to the hon. minister for his very frank statement and I presume that he will endeavour to carry out that principle, but he has missed my main point. I have a very distinct recollection, and I think it is the recollection of the other members of the committee, that we were assured that this building would not exceed in cost \$100,000.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Yes, I admit that.

Mr. HENDERSON. I want to know how in the world it is going to cost \$175,000. Who is responsible for that? I do not think that the cost of material, or the cost of labour has increased in any such ratio as 75 per cent in all. I fear very much that the officers of the department have full liberty to draw such plans as they think fit and that they are the men, and not the ministers, who actually fix the price to be paid for the completion of a building. We have no control over it because we have no control over these officers. If the minister allows his officers to go on and draw plans of a building that will cost 75 per cent more than parliament is given to understand it would cost, how are we going to put a stop to it? We cannot say now: Let us stop the construction of this building. It has been started on that principle, and will have to be completed on that principle, but I do trust that a closer watch will be kept and that when a pledge is given to parliament in regard to the cost of the building the minister will see that his engineer, his architect, and those who seem to me to have control of the expenditure will not overstep reasonable bounds and will keep somewhere near the limit fixed by parliament.

The MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS. Would the hon. gentleman allow me one word of explanation? It was out of my desire to give the full cost that the amount stated appears to be more than it should. The building itself will cost \$133,000. It was in carrying out the very policy that the hon. gentleman advocated, and of which I am in favour, that I insisted that the architect should give full details as to the amount that would be required to complete everything in connection with the building and I am giving the committee now the full and complete cost including fittings, furniture, boilers, ventilation, fencing, electric wiring, and everything connected therewith. I am giving the committee, as far as the architect has prepared under my instruction, the full amount required. Of course I am not asking for the full amount