

ing; I wonder what stand the government will take in that respect. May I say further to the hon. minister, that there is no saving for the government, because a rental of \$1,000 a year means the interest on \$20,000 at 5 per cent, exactly the amount which had been voted for the building of a new post office at that place, a post office which would have been a real asset to the country at large.

Before taking my seat, may I ask the hon. gentleman why the rent has been increased from \$360 to \$1,000 per year, and if the plans which have been submitted by the town to the department have been approved. Further, I would ask if the rent has already been paid or if it will be paid only after those improvements have been made.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): I think the best way to answer the hon. member is to give a short, concise, and complete history of the whole transaction. The lease was an old one and the rental being paid in this town was very low. The department desired to secure better accommodation, and the municipality came forward with the proposition to give us the desired accommodation in the municipal building. I submit that hon. members of this committee, as reasonable business men, will agree that when an opportunity is presented to the Dominion government to rent from a municipality suitable accommodation for its postal service, and such offer is accepted, the government is thereby rendering a service to the municipality concerned. The fact is that in the last estimates \$20,000 was appropriated for a post office at this town. My hon. friend seems to be annoyed and disappointed that this \$20,000 was not expended. Let us see what the expenditure would have actually amounted to. The vote was \$20,000. From our experience it is reasonable to suppose that the cost of the building would have exceeded the estimates by \$5,000 or \$10,000. Interest on \$30,000 at 5 per cent would be \$1,500; caretakers' remuneration \$500 or \$600, perhaps more; then there would be heating and maintenance to pay for. The annual expenditure for the postal accommodation would have run into between \$2,000 and \$3,000. We have secured suitable quarters for \$1,000 a year. I submit that this commendable economy will inure to the benefit not only of the municipality directly concerned, but of Canada as a whole. Personally, whenever an opportunity is presented of doing any like service to the public, I propose to embrace it. The lease is for five years and covers a portion of the ground floor of an annex to the city hall. We do not have to provide for caretaking or any similar expense. The lessor has to pay taxes, if any, and provide water,

[Mr. Pouliot.]

heat, light, cleaning, insurance and look after snow removal and large and small repairs. The transaction was carefully considered before being entered into, and I think it is in the interests of all concerned. We have a resolution from the local council approving the course taken by the department. It seems to me that it can be justified from every standpoint.

Mr. POULIOT: Does the lease contain a provision for its cancellation by the government within a certain time?

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): No, it is a straight five-year lease without any provision for cancellation. My hon. friend said the condition of the building was unsanitary. It is difficult to believe that any municipal corporation would maintain a building in an unsanitary condition. In any event the provincial authorities have control over such matters, and I do not think there is anything to fear on this ground. We are certainly going to insist that the accommodation be sufficient and that it be maintained in a proper sanitary condition.

Mr. POULIOT: I thank the hon. minister for his statement. It is perfectly true that the provincial authorities have control over sanitation, and therefore the director of health condemned the building as being unsanitary. The town has been very neglectful in regard to the sanitary condition of the building. Will the minister inform me if increased rent was paid to the town authorities before the improvements in the accommodation were made?

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): The information which I have under my hand does not state when the instalments of rent are payable. I am sorry I cannot tell my hon. friend whether any rent has yet been paid.

Mr. POULIOT: I desire again to direct the minister's attention to this fact, that during last winter the carpenters, labourers and other workingmen in the district had no work. I state this of my own personal knowledge because some of those men came to me for charity. If the building provided for in last year's estimates had been undertaken, those men would have had an opportunity to work and would have been saved the bitter humiliation of having to seek charity to tide them over the winter. Trois Pistoles, I admit, is not a big urban centre, but it is the second town in my constituency, and any hon. members who may motor to Gaspé this summer will have an opportunity of seeing it. The building in which accommodation has been leased by the government is very ugly, and as I have already stated, in an unsanitary