

Supply—Public Works

the post office at St. Andrew's would also give me some information concerning the building at Port au Port?

Mr. Green: The hon. member will be glad to hear that we are now making plans for a building at Port au Port and we hope to get it started this year.

Mr. Batten: I thank the minister for that information. Is he in a position now to give me any indication as to what type of building this will be and when tenders will be called?

Mr. Green: It is an addition to the present building.

Mr. Pickersgill: That is not quite so cheerful.

Mr. Green: The hon. member for Burin-Burgeo raised a question about the buildings at Burin and at Harbour Buffett. The former was authorized on March 26 of this year and the latter on March 3 of this year. One of them is already under construction. We hope to get them both built this year.

He made some other quite interesting suggestions. For example, he urged the use of local veneer. He said that the veneer plant had been unable to qualify. My instructions are that the specifications were not such as to prevent bids by the Newfoundland plant. They allow for birch plywood. Then he also asked us to build a larger building at Marystown. The Department of Public Works does not necessarily set the size of the building. That will depend upon the requests made by the other departments; for example, in this case the request was made by the Post Office Department. We are adding 200 extra square feet to the building at Marystown. There was some trouble there in connection with getting a site, apparently.

Mr. Carter: No.

Mr. Green: I am wrong. The hon. member complained about the site not being large enough.

Mr. Carter: That is right.

Mr. Green: The view of the officials is that the site is adequate. One difficulty was that the suggestion was made by the town that this building should also house a civic centre and provincial offices. If it were to do that, of course it might have to be bigger. However, we are not in the business of providing office space for civic centres or for provincial governments.

Then he raised the point of using local labour. In our contracts there are standard provisions that local labour must be employed. In addition to that, we are constantly on the watch for ways of making sure that the

[Mr. Batten.]

local people get as much as possible of the business where projects are being built in their district.

It is not as easy as it looks because when we call for tenders somebody may come in with a lower tender who may not be doing business in the particular centre where the project is being built and we cannot maintain a low tender basis of doing business and at the same time refuse to give a contract to a man who happens to make the lowest tender because he lives somewhere else. Every effort, however, is made to create the maximum amount of benefit from these projects in those areas where the projects are being constructed.

Mr. McIntosh: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question on a point of information. Is this a period when all 207 backbenchers might ask about all the buildings in our constituencies to find out what they are going to be built of and why they are not built in the different villages or towns?

The Chairman: We are now discussing item 329 which covers public buildings, construction and services.

Mr. Green: Perhaps I might help the hon. member by telling him that every member is entitled to do so but I am hoping that they all will not.

Mr. Carter: Following up what the minister has just said, could he say what control is exercised by his department in order to ensure that local labour is employed, because we do have riggers out of work in St. John's at the present time while riggers are being brought in from the mainland.

Mr. Green: Officials of the department try to watch this very closely and to see that local labour is employed.

Mr. Carter: I pointed out to the minister earlier today how overworked is his staff, and I know that in the St. John's office they are terribly overworked, so I do not see how they could possibly have much opportunity to look after matters of this kind in addition to the ordinary work of his department.

Mr. Green: We do the best we can and if the hon. member, or if any hon. member knows of a case where this is not being done we will be very grateful for any information they can give us about it.

Mr. Carter: I do not think there is any indication of laxity on the part of the minister's officials. I was not trying to imply that at all, but I do know that I have received complaints from riggers in St. John's who wonder why they cannot get work on these