

Supply—Public Works

amount, as stated by the minister on Friday last, shows an increase of \$41.6 million over the fiscal year ended March 31, 1958. The increase, however, is only \$23 million greater than the increase for the previous year, and we are asking ourselves if this is really the very extensive and challenging program outlined by the Prime Minister during the last election campaign.

The minister has mentioned 236 projects controlled by public works for other departments of the government, of which 168 are new items. This is certainly not the first year that the Department of Public Works has been asked to undertake construction projects not shown in his regular estimates but included in the estimates for other departments. The minister and members of the house know that this practice has been going on for years and years. I have here the report of the Department of Public Works for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1957.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Robichaud: Before the committee took recess at one o'clock I was referring to the 236 projects mentioned by the minister which were controlled by the Department of Public Works for other departments of the government. As I have stated, the minister knows, as do the other members of this house, that this practice has been going on for years. I have here the annual report of the Department of Public Works for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1957. I think that it would be a good thing to have a few paragraphs of this report on the record. This report starts as follows:

A considerable increase in activity for the Department of Public Works was seen in the fiscal year 1957.

I may add that during that fiscal year the Liberal government was in power.

Construction and maintenance work was continued on harbour facilities and protection works, dredging of navigable channels was carried out in harbours and rivers where required and testing laboratories were operated.

Further on it refers to the harbours and rivers engineering branch and states as follows:

Construction and repairs were made to 302 wharves, breakwaters, other harbour facilities and protection works, of which 232 were completed during the year and 70 still in progress as of March 31, 1957. In addition to this, 1,339 smaller projects were undertaken.

This last quotation might be of interest to the hon. member for Halifax. All of this

[Mr. Robichaud.]

was done in a period of inflation when material was in short supply and when in many cases labour was not always readily available.

I should like now to speak more specifically of public works projects for the province of New Brunswick. We are aware that in New Brunswick there is today a great deal of unemployment. What major projects have been initiated within the last few months for New Brunswick? In 1954-55 over \$1,350,000 was spent in New Brunswick for public buildings and over \$1 million was spent in 1955-56. What has been done this year by the government to relieve this serious unemployment situation by public works projects? We see in the main estimates \$1,625,000 plus \$380,000 in the supplementary estimates tabled a week or so ago. It is true this makes a total of \$2 million. However \$1 million is for the customs building in Saint John, New Brunswick for which tenders were called before the June 10, 1957 election; \$150,000 is to complete the Bathurst building and \$100,000 is for the Newcastle building, both projects for which tenders were called before the June 10 election. In fact, they are all projects for which tenders were called by the previous administration, with the exception of \$275,000 for Campbellton and Grand Falls buildings. The only items for New Brunswick in the supplementary estimates are \$380,000 for Newcastle and Saint John, two projects which were started by the previous Liberal administration. Mr. Chairman, that is certainly not an accelerated program of public works for New Brunswick. In other words, if these projects had not been initiated by the Liberal government there would have been no items for New Brunswick in the supplementary estimates just mentioned.

How does the Minister of Public Works expect to relieve unemployment in New Brunswick by this piecemeal program where the people of my province are getting less than their share of public works? The minister may bring to the attention of the committee the sum of \$4 million which is provided for in the harbours and rivers engineering services. Here again we see nothing but a continuation of projects initiated by the previous administration, with the exception of a few minor ones. The two main items such as \$900,000 for dredging in Courtenay bay and \$600,000 for breakwater replacements at North Head are all projects initiated last year by the previous administration and would have been completed this year irrespective of what party was in power.

The minister in his remarks mentioned the Campbellton-Cross Point bridge. Here I want to give the government credit for having succeeded in convincing the government of the