

*Supply—Public Works—Manitoba*

Mr. BEAUBIEN: Mr. Chairman, before this resolution carries I desire to make a few observations. At the last session of the last parliament an item was placed in the estimates for the construction of a post office at Dominion City, Manitoba, in my constituency. Up to the present time this building has not been constructed. In order to obtain some information in connection therewith, I wrote a letter the other day to the hon. Minister of Public Works as follows:

Dear Sir:

At the last session of the previous parliament an amount of \$12,000 was voted for the construction of a post office building at Dominion City, Manitoba. Tenders were called and closed on the 15th August. I understand that three tenders were submitted at figures much below the estimates passed, up to the present and no work has started.

Would you be kind enough to give me the reason which caused your department to ignore the will of parliament.

I received from the minister the following reply, dated April 24:

Dear Mr. Beaubien:

I have your letter of the 22nd instant, with reference to a post office building in Dominion City, Man.

At the time the matter of awarding the contract was under consideration, a careful review of the financial situation disclosed that the revenues were decreasing, and as buildings of this character are erected out of revenue, it was felt that circumstances at the time did not warrant the government in proceeding with the construction of this building.

As you know, revenues have not increased, and under the circumstances, it is not thought that the public interest would be seriously prejudiced by the erection of this building not being proceeded with. The small revenue from the office, namely about \$1,300 would not appear to warrant an expenditure on the construction of a public building at Dominion City at the present time.

It may be true that the revenues from this office are not very large, but the postal business is being carried on in a store and every hon. member knows the inconvenience of a post office being conducted in a general store. It seems to me that the all-important question in regard to the expenditure of public money is that the will of parliament be supreme. At the last session of the last parliament the then Minister of Public Works (Mr. Elliott) introduced an item of \$12,000 for the construction of this public building. The item was placed in the estimates because of the representations which had been made to him with regard to the inconvenience resulting from this post office being in a general store. No other building was available in the town for post office purposes. The estimates were brought down, the item was passed in

[Mr. H. A. Stewart.]

committee of the whole, the present Minister of Public Works, then in opposition, as well as other hon. members in opposition, allowing the item to pass. I see no reason why the will of parliament should not take precedence over every other consideration. The Prime Minister in nearly every speech he has made has advocated that our parliamentary institutions be respected and that the will of parliament be supreme. But how can we respect the parliament of Canada if an item passed unanimously by the house, advertised in the newspapers all over the country, is disregarded, the new Minister of Public Works—I do not accuse the hon. minister of any unfairness; far be it from such—claiming as an excuse that the revenues of the country are decreasing and therefore this work should not be gone on with. During the special session of parliament I urged that this building should be constructed. I was told by the minister that the matter was under consideration. When I returned home after prorogation, in answer to telegrams sent to the department I was told that the matter was still under consideration. The representatives of that municipality came to me and asked me when I expected the contract would be let. May I point out that the tenders were called for and came in by the 15th of August, and that those tenders were below the estimated cost of the department? Three tenders were submitted, one at \$6,925, another at \$7,133, and another at \$8,386. I know nothing about the politics of the tenderers; it makes no difference whether they were Conservative, Liberals, Progressives or anything else. But I do know that the tenders were far below the estimated cost of the department. That being so, and the proposed expenditure being only small, I can see no reason why it should not have been made.

We from the west sitting in this house had to pass in the last days of March or early in April a vote of \$2,000,000 for work done on the Welland canal, which had not been authorized by parliament, work which the Prime Minister first said was authorized by order in council, but in respect of which in the evening he said there was no order in council. The Minister of Railways and Canals, on that occasion said that that expenditure was authorized on account of the unemployment situation that existed at that time, as well as the favourable weather conditions, in order to help the unemployed. How did this government treat different parts of Canada in the matter of providing employment? The representative of the muni-