

mate estimate of what he intends to spend this \$37,500 for. According to the Auditor General's Report, he only required \$33,458. He has told us that he does not expect to repeat this expenditure to Mr. Woodyatt. Does he expect to spend \$9.60 for advertising in the St. John 'Globe' and the St. John 'Telegraph'?

Sir WILLIAM MULOCK. I have had some little experience in this House, and I think I am right in saying that this is the first time since I came to parliament that the examination of any minister has taken place on the lines pursued to-night. There is nothing to guide the minister in his estimate of expenditure but the experience of the past. My hon. friend (Mr. Taylor) is a householder. He has a fair idea of how much he spent last year for the maintenance of himself and his family. He knows what he pays, in bulk to his butcher and baker and candlestick maker—how much it cost him to maintain his house last year. He probably figures on spending a similar amount next year. But if he were asked if he intended to spend the same amounts on the same people he would say: No, I may change my butcher or my baker; I may change my bill of fare; I may wear different garments and have different personal expenditure; but I shall probably spend in the current year about as much as last year. Nobody can tell exactly what items will be incurred as contingencies in the public service. This sum is voted to cover a miscellaneous collection of expenditure which cannot be foreseen in detail. And if my hon. friend, having had full explanation from the Minister of Customs, threatens this House with obstructive tactics unless he gets certain statements made to him, I think this committee should respect themselves enough not to tolerate the success of such tactics. This is not an unusual thing with the hon. gentleman. In fact, it is part of his programme to declare that nothing shall be done unless his particular demands are complied with.

There is an effort made on the part of the government to be reasonable at all times, it is our desire to do so on all occasions. But when an hon. gentleman persists in asking a question that has never been asked, as far as I remember, during my experience of 23 sessions, I think the committee is warranted in concluding that no public good is going to come from the prosecution of any such inquiry. Now we are told by the hon. member for Leeds that he will not let this item pass until he gets information that cannot be given. He has asked a lot of absurd questions. He has asked the Minister of Customs to state how much he is going to pay for this and for that item, how much he is going to pay this man and that man in the future because similar services were paid in the past—a question I think on re-

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flection he will be ready to acknowledge was not reasonable. He has asked the Minister of Customs to do the impossible, to tell this committee how this item is going to be made up in the various contingencies. Since the hon. gentleman has told us that he will not allow this committee to proceed until that information is furnished, we have come to a deadlock. The hon. gentleman has threatened to obstruct because the minister will not answer a question impossible to be answered.

Mr. INGRAM. When the hon. gentleman talks about the Auditor General's report showing us the expenditure up to the 30th of June last, it was my duty as a member of this House to go through these items and investigate them. If there is anything we do not understand we come to this committee when these items are under discussion, and ask the minister to explain them to us. Now here is an item of \$37,500 the details of which the minister says have not been asked for before. Is that a good reason why the minister should not answer?

Sir WILLIAM MULOCK. How can he give the details of a future expenditure of this kind? It has been the practice to group in contingencies a number of expenditures of an indefinable character, it has been done by all governments, and it is the only possible way of carrying on the business. The hon. gentleman knows quite well that never before in the passage of Customs items did any member ever ask what is being asked for to-night. There is no particle of good coming from it. The government side are quite as able to remain here as the opposition side. We have had many of these contests in the past, I have taken part in them in opposition, and I have come to the conclusion that there is no practical good in them. Hon. gentlemen are expected to give reasonable criticism to our items, but at the same time to allow us to make substantial progress. This desultory, pointless debate has been prolonged now into the small hours, and to all appearance we are to be kept here indefinitely because at the present time the hon. member for South Leeds will not recede from that position. The opposition cannot dominate this House. There is no disposition on the part of the majority to do it. The majority is as conciliatory and reasonable as it is possible for it to be. It is only in that spirit that we meet the House. But, there comes a time when discussion ceases, when there is no profit any longer in discussion and I submit that we reached that point long ago in connection with this item. It is impossible to define in any more detail than the Auditor General report defines the prospective expenditure of this money. Why persist in asking for what it is impossible to give?

Mr. INGRAM. If the hon. minister had said in the first place that he had not an