

must follow this war. We are piling up expenditures and debts which would be alarming were it not for the wonderful resources of this country. Wonderful and varied as the resources of this country are, there is still every necessity for the wisest and most rigid economy in every branch of the service, and in this connection I have some fault to find with my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Sir Thomas White) for the estimates which he brought down last year. I say to him to-day that in my judgment he should have cut off from these estimates \$20,000,000 to \$30,000,000, and I think he could have done it with perfect ease. On public works, chargeable to income, there is provision for an expenditure of \$22,000,000, and if we analyse these figures we will find that the expenditure is for post offices, public buildings, postal stations, drill halls and armories, all expenditures of a kind for buildings which are in the nature of luxuries. Such expenditures, in time of peace, are perfectly allowable if the revenue is adequate, but in time of war I say to my hon. friend that all sorts of expenditure ought to be rigidly cut off, and that the budget should be limited to the bare necessities, and to the ability of the treasury to carry on the government.

I am sorry that in the speech of His Royal Highness no mention is made of any intention of cutting down expenditure to the greatest possible degree. I have been in office myself and I know the importunities that are put upon ministers for this kind of expenditure—post offices, postal buildings, drill halls, armories, and so on. Every member is anxious to favor in that way the constituency which he represents. I repeat that in time of peace such expenditures are allowable, but in time of war we must preach to the Canadian people the necessity of economy, not only in the public service, but in respect to private expenditures also. Upon this point we might well take a leaf out of the book of the British authorities, who have, since the beginning of the war, never ceased to represent to the British people the necessity of cutting off all luxuries and keeping expenditures to the bare necessities of life so long as we are at war. That is one of the sacrifices which we have to make in order to attain the great object we have in view. It is not yet too late, and I hope that when my hon. friend presents his estimates this year we will find that he has been preparing for us a pleasant surprise.

[Sir Wilfrid Laurier.]

I was also disappointed when I saw no mention in the speech from the Throne of a transaction which took place during the recess, a transaction which was abnormal, and which, because it was abnormal, should have been brought to the attention of the House. I refer to the incident which occurred on the 27th November last, when the Government took forcible possession, by forced sale, of all the wheat which was in the elevators at the head of lake Superior and eastward. In times of war the Government has a right for military necessity to exercise such an abnormal power. That power has been exercised during this war—in France, I believe, if nowhere else—but certainly in France. But upon every occasion when such an abnormal power has been exercised it has always been with the sole object, where there was scarcity of a commodity, of keeping that commodity for the people and to prevent it from being exported abroad, thereby enhancing the price. But that is not the reason in this case. If the Government had commandeered the wheat which was in the elevators at the head of lake Superior, when they took some 17,000,000 bushels, such action was not taken on account of any scarcity. As was announced in the speech from the Throne, we never have had such a crop as we had last harvest. We are told, and correctly told, that the wheat crop last year amounted to 330,000,000 bushels. Out of 330,000,000 bushels the Government have resorted to this extraordinary measure of commandeering 17,000,000 bushels. For what reason? The reasons were given two days afterwards. The commandeering took place on the 27th November, and on the 29th November all the press published the following:

Official Government Statement.

Ottawa, November 28.—The following official statement was issued by the government to-night:

The phenomenal crop of wheat in the Canadian west has brought upon the government the duty of assisting to the farthest extent possible in its marketing. The supply of wheat the world over is known to have been abundant, and the importance of taking advantage of every opportunity to provide for the disposing of our grain is on that account the greater. For many months the government has been in touch with the British authorities with a view to procuring orders from the United Kingdom and the allied governments in order that the utmost share of the consuming demand in those countries may be turned towards our Canadian surplus. As a consequence of this, the British Government has requested the Canadian Government to provide within a short time a very large supply of No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 Canadian northern wheat.