

Now, I have just a few concluding remarks to make of a general character. I do not know that they will be accepted, but I intend to make them. I make them because I have given some study to public affairs for the last 25 or 30 years, and there are some things which I think the Finance Minister and the government at this time ought to at least set about doing. It is one thing to frame your tariff schedules and gather in your taxes from year to year. It is quite as important to expend these revenues honestly, economically and on intelligent principles. I do not see any greater field for useful work than this, and I do not see any greater object which a government ought to have at heart than to accomplish this in some sort of business and common sense way. We must recollect that conditions are very different from what they were. When we were a small country with a small revenue and a small expenditure, each minister himself had a greater check on the work of his department than he has to-day. The government had a greater check, and so had parliament; but when these operations are multiplied a hundredfold, my view is that these checks are to-day absolutely inadequate and that something more ought to be supplied. What check have the ministers over an expenditure of some \$100,000,000 extending all over this country, and on most diversified objects? Under present conditions they are almost entirely at the mercy of others. They cannot give this expenditure the personal supervision which they could an expenditure of a fairly moderate amount, either in its planning, or its carrying out. That applies to the different great departments of this government, and to the minister of each of these departments. With the outside work he has to do, with the cabinet work which takes up his time, no minister can have that check which ought to be had over the administration of his own department in the way of expenditure. But you will say the cabinet checks the minister. That used to be the case when we had a smaller expenditure, and when practically every item came before the cabinet and was explained, and passed upon by the cabinet. But to-day that would be absolutely impossible. It is not attempted to be done except in some very special instances, and the result is that the supervision and check of the cabinet over departmental expenditure has largely passed away. Is not that true? I appeal to the Finance Minister himself. But you may say that ultimately the House of Commons will be a check. Yes, it used to be, but it is not any longer to any considerable extent. When I first came to this House, the items in supply were criticised by men on the government benches as well as in the opposition. But to-day

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once the estimates are on the table, tell me, have you ever seen a government member attempt anything at all in the way of criticism of any of these estimates. Why, they are not even in the House when the estimates go through. The minister who is putting through his estimates is left alone by his followers, and has the whole business to attend to by himself. And on the opposition side, whatever may be our energy and disposition to work, it is impossible, under present conditions, when \$115,000,000 of estimates are turned loose on the House, without any information in the estimates themselves, it is absolutely impossible for the opposition to exercise any effective check. All they can do is to wheedle out from the minister in charge, who is anxious to give no more information than he is absolutely obliged to give, what details they can. Do you mean to tell me that that is an efficient check on expenditure?

Now, ought there not to be a check on expenditure? There ought to be. And where can it be found? Here you have, for instance, millions of dollars being spent every year for the construction of public buildings. And on what principle is this money spent? There is no proper principle on which it should be spent but one: build a public building because the public service needs it and cannot be properly carried on without it. Is there any other reason for providing a public building when it has to be paid for, not with the party's money, not with the government's money, but with the people's money of which the government are the trustees? There is no other reason, no other principle, no other foundation of action but that. And yet, that is not the principle that is followed. Day after day we go through the estimates here when public buildings are under consideration, when large expenditures are initiated and no public need can be shown for the buildings proposed. I do not wish to labour that point, but only indicate a remedy. It seems to me that what ought to be done is to have some system of co-ordination. There ought to be a board in some way established before which all large claims for public expenditures of that kind should go for investigation and impartial report. Not that that board should have power to decide; the duty of the board should be to gather the information and give it impartially from a business standpoint in the form of a printed report, and then the minister and the House could do what it pleased about it. In some way or other a co-ordinating board of that kind will have to be appointed if we wish to reduce this wasteful, unwarranted expense in public buildings.

In the matter of transport there is the same confusion of ideas, the same lack of