

thought that it was critical, he honestly believed it was critical, but what did he do? This proclamation was issued by the President about Christmas time, and Parliament was called on the second day of January. At that very time the hon. gentleman should have asked Parliament for an appropriation. It is not a question of scare, it is not a question so much of the expenditure of money, as it is a deliberate wilful violation of a well-understood principle in the constitution, that the representatives of the people should govern the expenditure of money. Sir, this is not the first time that hon. gentlemen have violated that feature of the constitution. It was convenient for them to have an Act of Parliament passed whereby they might expend hundreds of thousands of dollars by Orders in Council. We all know that the Government of the day have abused the privileges which we gave them of expending the public money by Orders in Council. In this case, I do not suppose any Order in Council was issued, but what do we find? Parliament met on 2nd January, the panic was over long before this contract was entered into, which was on the 2nd or 3rd of March. No panic existed then, and there was no possible reason why the Government should not have taken Parliament into its confidence at that time. There was no possible danger of creating any feeling in the neighboring republic or elsewhere, because it is a notorious fact that our militiamen are imperfectly armed, that sooner or later new arms must be provided for them. So that the excuse of the Minister of Justice that it was on account of the critical condition of affairs at that time falls to the ground because there was nothing critical about the position of affairs then. The crisis had passed, the little ripple had gone over, the storm had cleared away, small as it was. So the reason for the action of the Government at that time ceased to exist. What did hon. gentlemen opposite do? There was no hurry for buying these arms then, there is no hurry for buying them now. What should have been done? This colonel sent over to England may be a very able officer and a thoroughly reliable man—I know nothing about him—but instead of consulting this officer alone it was the duty of the Government to have consulted the militia officers of the country. The Government had no right to take on themselves the responsibility of sending one man to England to involve this country in contracts to the amount of \$1,000,000 or \$2,000,000. They exceeded their power, and this indeed is admitted by the Minister of Justice. They sent this officer to England to enter into contracts without having obtained the authority of Parliament; the Minister had not such authority, that authority was vested only in Parliament, and so any contract made has been made without the authority of law. The hon. gentleman says in excuse of the Government's action that a crisis was on. I repeat that the crisis had passed. I assert that it was the duty of the Government to have consulted the militia of Canada. But this was not done; everything was carried out in the office of the Minister of Militia. This is the first information as to the steps taken by the Government. While I am always willing to give the Minister of Justice credit for fairness and frankness, because ever since he has occupied an official position he has extended courtesy to every one, and been apparently frank and desirous of doing what is right, I think in this case the hon. gentleman is somewhat disingenuous when he says that it was the

crisis which impelled the Government to act as they have done. The hon. gentleman further proceeded to excuse the Government's action by stating that any announcement that Canada was rearming its volunteers might have raised antagonism in the minds of American statesmen. But that reason falls to the ground when it is remembered that in the Speech from the Throne it was announced that such steps were to be taken, and when we remember that in February notice of the resolution now under discussion was placed on the Order paper. I submit that the reason given by the hon. gentleman for the improvident way in which the Government have acted entirely falls to the ground. There was no reason for entering into this contract without first getting the authority of Parliament. Parliament was sitting, and it should have authorized the borrowing of money for the purpose of purchasing those arms. According to the action taken by hon. gentlemen opposite Parliament would be called simply to record the acts of the Government. All constitutional law and responsibility are entirely ignored. The Government, upon its own responsibility, without the authority of Parliament, undertakes to enter into contracts involving millions of dollars, and thus commits a direct violation of the constitution, and commits an act which, if recognized by Parliament, virtually abrogates the powers of Parliament as a representative body. There is no use calling 215 members here if the Government of the day can upon its own responsibility undertake to spend the taxes of the people. The Government is really a committee of the House. They have no power unless authorized by Parliament to spend one dollar of the public funds, and if such funds are spent without proper justification they come within condemnation and censure. In the case of an invasion of this country no objection could be or would be taken, because all parties would do everything necessary to resist an attack. But no invasion took place, there was no danger of invasion; the difficulty had passed away and peace prevailed. But if there was danger where would we be? Here we are in April, and we have received no new rifles. What would the soldiers have been doing? They would have been fighting with the old rifle. I think the Government by their action have seriously violated the constitution. Under all the circumstances the Government should be severely censured and condemned by Parliament. I believe they will be condemned by the country at large when the true facts become known. This is not a time for unnecessarily embarking the country in enormous expenditure, for thousands of people are at their wit's ends to know how to meet their business engagements; they are loaded down with taxation, they are without markets, business is prostrated and people are fortunate who are able to make ends meet at the end of the year, and many thousands and tens of thousands are in actual want of the necessities of life. Yet at such a time as this Government are rolling up the public debt by millions, increasing the annual expenditure, and making it utterly impossible for an incoming government to reduce taxation. In four years no less than \$15,000,000 have been added to the public debt in addition to an enormous amount of taxation taken from the people. Yet hon. gentlemen opposite will declare that we are not spending enough money, that the public expenditure should be 40,000,000. That no doubt will be the amount this year, and our expenditure will

be so large that it will be necessary to borrow in the English market \$10,000,000 or \$12,000,000 to meet our obligations, and during this year we shall no doubt add millions to our public debt. This is a time when we should go slowly. This is a time when we should give the people of the country a chance to recuperate, a chance to get upon their feet. This is a time when we expect the Government of the country to help the people, instead of loading them down by enormous increases to the debt of the country. This Government seems to be forgetful of their duty to the people. They seem to think that the money belongs to them, that the stream from which they have taken it will keep on flowing, and that they can expend it as they think proper, whether it be in the interest of the country or not, so long as it is spent in a way that will keep themselves in power. Sir, the conduct of the Government should be condemned. In violating the constitution they are disregarding the best interests of the country, and I believe that when we appeal in a short time to the electorate, the people of this country will declare in no uncertain voice, that the Government have been false stewards indeed.

MR. FOSTER—I wish to say just a word or two with reference to this. We have been now about two hours on this resolution. It has been very thoroughly discussed, and we have been able to draw several conclusions from the tone of the discussion which has taken place. There is other very important business, and if it is the intention of hon. gentlemen opposite that this resolution shall not be passed, and the Government shall not be put in funds to keep its obligation, why, we might as well recognize that in time and go on to some other business that hon. gentlemen opposite will feel disposed to allow us to do. The constitutional ground was taken by the early speakers in the debate, and urged with a great deal of force. To a great extent it was acquiesced in by my hon. friend the Minister of Justice, but it is not unimportant to briefly review the state of things as they actually were, not as they appear to us now. The hon. gentlemen who have spoken last have diverged from the first argument, and the member for Wellington (Mr. McMullen), and the member for Lambton (Mr. Lister) have left the ground of any unconstitutionality, and have taken bold and strong ground against any expenditure for the militia at all, so far as the armaments are concerned. I have no doubt, sir, that these two hon. gentlemen largely voice what is the real sentiment of hon. gentlemen opposite, clothe it however much they may under the constitutional garb. Very well, sir, here we are. In December of last year a state of circumstances arose, which hon. gentlemen opposite are quite at liberty now to discount as harmless tail-twisting, and the like of that. It was not so considered by the people of this country. It was not so considered by the people of Great Britain, and I do not think there is any circumstance that has taken place within my memory, at least, in connection with which feelings were drawn so tensely between the different members of the great Anglo-Saxon world as they were during December of last year. At that time the Government was here and the Parliament was not. And, acting as in an emergency, the Government thought it would not be doing its duty if it did not take immediate steps to put the militia of this country, so far as arms and armaments were concerned, into a state of efficiency for whatever