

commitments—when I say commitments, I mean there are works and so forth under way at the present time in conjunction with the provinces that ought to be carried forward: there is the question of seed grain; there is the question of continued relief until the spring months at least to the stricken area in the west; there is the question of unemployment relief in the great urban centres where in some instances certain works are now going on. I have in mind those municipalities where they have been unable to complete the work they have had under way for relief purposes because of climatic conditions, where only part of the money which was allocated has been spent, and only part of the work which was started has been carried out. They are entitled to complete those works, because unfortunately the condition of unemployment is still present. We are asking the house, therefore, to continue the powers granted to us last year until the first of May in order to give reasonable opportunity to complete those undertakings.

With due deference to my hon. friends opposite I think during the past week or ten days there has been altogether too much time spent on the constitutional side of this matter. That question was decided a year ago.

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. STEVENS: Decidedly. Let me put this to my hon. friends opposite: They were not satisfied, that is true, but after all, this house consists of that side and this side.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): No, no. Parliament consists of that side now.

Mr. STEVENS: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, I am learning something new about parliament. I always thought that this house consisted of all sides.

Some hon. MEMBERS: No, no.

Mr. STEVENS: My hon. friends opposite say no. I do my hon. friend from West Edmonton (Mr. Stewart) this courtesy at least—I recognize him as an integral part of this parliament. True, he did not consent to the passing of this act last session; but the validity of a statute is not based upon the unanimous consent of the house. It is true my hon. friend spoke against the bill a year ago, but parliament as such,—this house and the other house—passed the bill and it became law.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I ask my hon. friend this question: Was not the bill that parliament passed last session for the express purpose of giving the government

power to act while parliament was not in session; and is not the present bill intended to give the government power to act while parliament is in session?

Mr. STEVENS: My hon. friend is quite entitled to that view, but we are here now before parliament; I am giving the reasons why we are here, and justifying the course of the government under this act during the past year. I say to parliament that because of the course pursued by the government and because of the absence of anything in the nature of abuses such as are indicated as being feared by hon. gentlemen opposite, the house is justified in extending this power until May 1, and that is all there is to it.

Let me remind the house that there was not an hon. member opposite, and for that matter there was no one in this country, who could have stated exactly what would be the requirements during the past year; it was a physical impossibility to do so. No one could have done it, and if the government had not possessed some power of this kind it could not have met the emergencies which arose. The government does not propose that any unreasonable advantage shall be taken in connection with this bill; it does not intend that it shall be improperly used. The government simply desires that the general powers of the act may be used to meet the emergent conditions which arise from time to time.

It is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, to speak at greater length on this subject, but I do feel that the house should not weigh this matter with the view of raising once again an obscure constitutional question such as was successfully raised by my right hon. friend in 1926. I do not wish to be unkind to the right hon. gentleman, but as I listen to his unctuous declamations every day, I sometimes wonder if it is not his desire to stir up in the minds of the people a suspicion that some terrible inroads are being made on the constitutional rights of the ordinary people.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: But my hon. friend does not distinguish between obscure issues and fundamental issues. These are fundamental issues.

Mr. STEVENS: I am reminded that at the moment the fundamental issue here is the relief of the people and the bettering of conditions with which we are confronted to-day.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: And I might add the immediate relief, which can be given at once if the government will bring in a supply bill this afternoon.