

tensibly to carry on the war, and then hand it out to political favourites. Day by day the people of this country are realizing more clearly that the money that was obtained from them for war purposes is being diverted to works which could very well wait until after the war. My hon. friend will tell us that certain works must be carried on during the war. The Minister of Railways says that he has made a contract for building a bridge, and the Minister of Finance and other hon. ministers will have equally specious reasons why the other items should be concurred in. Look, for instance, at the items for the Public Works Department on pages 15 and 16 of the Supplementary Estimates. Does the Minister of Finance mean to say that it will help win the war if those items are voted? Does he mean to say that this Government have any right to divert to these items the money that was obtained for war purposes? My hon. friend knows the financial condition of this country at the present time. He has complained publicly of the burden that has been placed upon him, as Minister of Finance, in dealing with these questions. We all know that his task is a serious one. It may be that my hon. friend does not sit tightly enough upon the treasury of this country. He is perhaps too ready to yield to the solicitations and other methods adopted by his colleagues when they desire expenditures to be made. I think my hon. friend's serious appreciation of the financial condition of this country—and he must have a serious appreciation of it because he knows the facts—is sometimes weakened by the importunities of the hon. gentlemen who are associated with him. But if that is so, it is no excuse or justification whatever for the minister. There should be no expenditures in this country whatever except upon works that are absolutely essential. Not a dollar should be spent on works involving commitments for the future. As my hon. friend beside me has pointed out, the contract for the bridge referred to by the Minister of Railways was let last year, during war time, with a full knowledge of our financial conditions.

What is the condition to-day in this country? The munition workers are being laid off. One of the greatest sources of revenue that the Minister of Finance has, namely, the customs, is being struck off because of the lessened demand for the raw materials and machines necessary in the production of munitions, and on which duty would have to be paid to the treasury. The plain

[Mr. Macdonald.]

people of this country, who have this source of income stopped, are nevertheless compelled to submit to the various forms of taxation imposed upon them by hon. gentlemen opposite. Does my hon. friend mean to say that under those circumstances the money of the people should be used for any other purpose except to maintain ordinary conditions in this country? My hon. friend must get down to that basis, for that is the only proper basis in these times. To say that, notwithstanding the financial condition of the country, we should vote large sums of money to hon. gentlemen and leave them to decide whether the money shall be spent or not, is absolutely improper. If an item in the Estimates cannot be absolutely justified as being necessary at the moment, it should not be voted by Parliament, but should be struck out.

Mr. LEMIEUX: The conduct of the Government, so far as commissions are concerned, reminds me of that famous saying of a great orator during the French Revolution: that the Revolution was not unlike Saturn devouring his own children. The Minister of Finance, the watchdog of the treasury, is improperly diverting the revenues of this country at a tremendous rate. Look at the number of commissions that have been appointed by this Government to investigate almost every subject. The latest important commission to be appointed was the Drayton-Acworth-Smith Commission. And the Government ignores its conclusions. The Government appointed the best men in Canada, the United States and Great Britain, to investigate the railway situation here. I find in the report of this commission—the Drayton-Acworth report—quite an instructive statement in regard to the Hudson Bay railway, which we are now discussing. At page 82 they say:

We understand that construction work on the Hudson Bay line has been suspended. We think that the work should not in any case be recommenced till more urgent needs have been met and money is more easily procurable. And if work on the line is begun again, we think it should be done in the most economical manner possible, and only up to the standard of a local line, bearing in mind that it cannot be expected for many years to come to be self-supporting. Considering the small advantage in rail mileage from the grain-growing areas, which the Hudson Bay possesses over the existing routes to Port Arthur, and that from many districts it possesses no advantage at all; considering further the short and uncertain period of navigation in the bay, and that grain consigned to Port Nelson will consequently always be liable to be detained there for nine months till navigation is again opened; considering that