

one or two such orders covering the employment of some clerk, or matter of that kind, incidental to relief payments which could only be met in this way but so far as I have been able to follow proceedings in council—and I believe I have followed most of them carefully—I know there has been an endeavour on the part of the ministers individually, and the cabinet as a whole, to see that wherever possible the doctrine of control of parliament over expenditures is preserved to the full.

Those were and are the differences between hon. gentlemen opposite and ourselves. Although I do not make the next observation in a fault-finding manner, but simply by way of reasonable explanation of some of the difficulties with which the present administration has had, and may yet have to contend, may I say that had the general election been held in the spring of last year, at the latest, as I suggest it should have been, the incoming administration would have had the summer and fall months to arrange its whole program with respect to relief and unemployment. It would have had time to prepare agreements with different provinces and to bring forward such measures for the purpose of relief and providing employment as, after careful and thorough investigation, it had concluded should be brought forward. However, with the general election not taking place until October, and the present administration arranging to have parliament meet as early as possible in the new year, being obliged in the interval to devote much of its time to the negotiations of the trade agreement between Canada and the United States, and to other matters of like importance, I am frank to say that it has not been possible to bring in relief legislation, or measures for the provision of employment, in the form in which we should have liked to present them to parliament. To a much larger extent than otherwise would have been the case, we have been obliged to introduce legislation resembling that placed on the statute books by our predecessors in office. Not only have we been obliged to adopt measures which in many instances had to be continued, but to follow as well much of the language of existing statutes. We have made this advance notwithstanding, a most important one I submit, the one which we urged while in opposition, namely, to the greatest degree possible, we have sought to restore to the House of Commons and to parliament control over all expenditures of public money for relief purposes and for purposes of providing employment. May I add that the government is most anxious in the

existing state of affairs in our country to see that through the agency of the state, where it cannot be provided otherwise, relief is provided wherever it is necessary, and that work is provided wherever possible. In doing that we recognize however, another obligation which we believe to be equally imperative, namely that as respects expenditures which may have to be made on a large scale to effect both these ends every due precaution is taken to protect the public interest and to safeguard the public treasury.

We are seeking to meet the relief and unemployment problem in the most considerate manner possible, but we are also seeking, by every means parliament has thus far devised, to protect the treasury against unnecessary extravagance and against waste, and to avoid doing those things which serve only to perpetuate rather than relieve the present unfortunate condition of unemployment. It is my firm belief that if from the outset the previous administration had held to the constitutional course we are now endeavouring to follow quite as much by way of effective assistance in the matter of relief and the provision of employment would have been provided while in addition, many millions of dollars, which in great part have been wasted, would have been saved, and the problem of relief and unemployment to-day would not begin to be the serious problem it is.

Mr. NEILL: Mr. Chairman, for a moment or two I should like to refer to the merits of the order in council concerning Chinamen, to which reference has been made. The hon. member for Yale (Mr. Stirling) and the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) did not deal with the merits, but discussed only the point as to whether or not the present government was consistent in making use of the powers conferred by section 3 of the act.

Apparently on the day this house met an order in council was passed by the present government, the details of which I have not before me, but one which I understand would have the effect of allowing Chinamen who had recently returned to China and were liable to forfeiture of their right to return, by virtue of having stayed more than two years, to extend the period to, I believe, the latter days of 1939. I believe the order in council makes reference to the numbers affected, running into four thousand or five thousand—and when I say that I am speaking from memory. The point I wish to make is that I was pleased to hear the Prime Minister say that on account of the way the order in council was passed it was not operative, and for reasons which I should like to