

certain things which have taken place in the last few years.

The hon. member for Calgary West (Mr. Shaw) has moved an amendment to the amendment, in which he deprecated the fact that the public debt had increased by \$45,000,000 this year. Well, Sir, there is good reason why the public debt should have increased that much, and one reason is what took place, not last year, but several years ago. Whilst the war is responsible for a great deal of the increase in the public debt, my opinion is that most of our troubles are due to what was known as "Union government" in this country. If instead of having a Union government in 1917, we had had either a Conservative or a Liberal, we should not find ourselves half as badly off as we are at the present time.

I notice that the hon. member for Calgary West, in speaking of the public debt, offered no solution of our difficulties. He talked, of course, about economizing, and how fine a thing it would be to reduce the public debt, but he did not make any concrete suggestions how it could be done. The hon. member for Springfield (Mr. Hoey), who also moved an amendment, talked about the economic conditions in this country and endeavoured to tell us that those conditions should be bettered. It is all very well to get up and criticize, but unless your criticism is constructive it is an absolute waste of time to get up on your feet before an intelligent assembly of this kind and make statements which you are unable to back up.

Let us look into this question of the public debt for a moment, and see what can be done with regard to expenditure in this country. I hold in my hands the Estimates for the year ending March 31, 1923. These Estimates were passed last year by the members of this parliament, and totalled \$466,983,000. If we look at the Estimates for a moment we shall see why the hon. member for Calgary West and the hon. member for Springfield did not show us where this government and this parliament could save money for the taxpayers. What do we find? The very first item is "Interest on public debt, \$140,000,000." Now it is impossible for us to get around that expenditure. The interest on the public debt has to be paid until such a time as Canada is capable of paying off all or part of it. This charge, of course, was largely brought about through the great expenditure during the war years. It was also brought about by other causes. Some of the amounts which have been spent were not in my opinion absolutely

necessary, but, of course, there were certain amounts that had to be expended, and some of them very large amounts.

I spoke a moment ago of the cost of the war. Nobody objects to any legitimate expenditure in that connection, but during the past few years the amounts which have gone to make up our public debt have been expended all over this country. For instance, in the city of Halifax, which is the greatest port in Canada, a large amount of money was spent some few years ago. Some \$20,000,000 was expended on the port of Halifax, and I say that that amount of money was wasted. It was an unnecessary expenditure. It should not have been expended where it was, because the eastern terminals where they at present exist are really of no benefit to the port of Halifax or to the shipping which comes there. The whole city was cut in two. I say that instead of spending \$20,000,000 upon that work, an expenditure of \$2,000,000 in another part of the city would give us far better terminals.

Take the city of St. John, where also a large amount of money was spent in development work. Whether the expenditure was wise or not is a moot question. Some people contend that in order to develop the port of St. John it was necessary that that large amount of money should be spent; but I have heard criticisms, especially with regard to the dry-dock in Courtenay Bay. I have heard it said that the money spent there was absolutely wasted because a ship cannot be hauled out to be cleaned or placed in dry dock unless you have a high tide in the Bay of Fundy, and as those who read the Nautical Almanac know, the tide is some 35 feet.

There were other great expenditures. This government and the late government have voted large sums of money to the Montreal Harbour Commissioners, for instance. I think everybody will agree that that expenditure has been for the development of the port. Perhaps more money has been voted than was absolutely necessary, but Montreal is a great port, and it seems to me if we are ever to develop the business of this country large sums of money must be spent where development work is necessary. So, when members of this House or people outside regret the increase in the public debt, they should bear in mind that no criticism should be offered to legitimate expenditure.

Then we have been spending for the last few years large sums of money on harbour works in Quebec. Large amounts have also been expended on harbour improvements in