

Mr. MACDONALD: It is a good thing to see the Minister of Finance so optimistic and to hear him express the opinion that it will not be necessary to issue a proclamation in the terms of the Act proposed. I should be inclined to agree with him that as matters are at present, perhaps, it is not necessary to issue such a proclamation. But I apprehend that every prudent business man in this country who realizes the conditions foreshadowed for our business interests in Canada must feel that the minister should reserve to the Government the right to put this proclamation into force should conditions arise which some think are very near at hand. It is well to be optimistic, but I believe that we are on the verge of conditions in which a proclamation of that kind, limited in its nature, will be imperatively demanded. I believe this power should be given to the Government.

Mr. PUGSLEY: I regret to have to disagree with my hon. friend (Mr. Macdonald). I do not think it would be wise in this country to issue such a proclamation, nor do I think it would be wise to give the Governor in Council the power to issue such a proclamation. Conditions here are different from what they are in the old-world countries. I think it would be better to run the risk of a few people being sued than to issue a proclamation under which a great number of people would be able to set their creditors at defiance. Such a measure would disarrange our affairs and destroy credit, and I think the authority proposed should not be given to the Government by this Parliament.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: I presume that the Minister of Justice will be prepared to make a statement on behalf of the Government upon the subject of the extent of the jurisdiction of Parliament in relation to this proposed legislation, and the scope it is proposed this legislation shall have.

Hon. W. T. WHITE: I may say that this matter, like many other matters that have arisen since the outbreak of war, has continuously engaged the attention of myself and of the Government. I appreciate to the full the argument of my hon. friend the member for St. John as to the gravity of taking a step which would postpone the payment of obligations. Speaking for myself, and speaking also for the Government, I can say to this House that no step bringing into force a moratorium enactment, either of a general or of a limited character, would be taken unless it were made perfectly clear to the Government, who should and

would be in touch with the financial and business community, that such action was imperatively necessary and in the national interest. It is impossible to define the circumstances and conditions under which the Government would take such action, but I can conceive of conditions arising under which this Government, like the Government of Great Britain, might feel it in the public interest incumbent upon them to make a moratorium proclamation, either of a general or limited character, and for such time and subject to such terms and conditions as the Government might think proper.

I have kept in the closest possible touch with the Canadian situation. I have consulted with leading members of the financial and business community, and, to-day, according to the opinions that have been expressed to me by men whose opinions are entitled to weight in the community, there is no occasion, so far as I can judge, for the Government taking any action of the character which we are discussing. As far as the immediate future is concerned, I repeat I do not see that any such action is necessary. I am not asking for this legislation, which is general in its character, with a view of the Government immediately taking some steps under it, but I am profoundly convinced of the wisdom of having on the statute books of Canada a general legislative enactment under which the Government may, should the emergency arise, take steps that may be imperatively necessary in the financial and business interests of the community.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Does my hon. friend not think that the very fact of Parliament's giving to the Governor in Council the power to bring this law into force will disarrange credit and interfere very seriously with business conditions?

Mr. WHITE: I think not, for this reason: that the circumstances of the time are abnormal. In my Budget speech this afternoon I pointed out precisely what has taken place. I suppose among the most conservative nations in the world, if not the most conservative, is Great Britain; yet upon the occasion on which this Government took certain action, which I shall explain to the House later in connection with this same Bill, we had this condition in Great Britain. It was upon the eve of the declaration of war by Great Britain against Germany. Monday the 3rd of August had been a legal holiday. The Imperial Government declared