

bring in cars in the middle-class field from the United States. These cars have gone up \$600 or more in price, and people will not pay the money. He is left with stocks of parts for repairs, and with a few cars on hand he cannot sell. But he cannot bring in any more, because the tax makes their sale prohibitive. I have no particular brief for men who are bringing in these automobiles from the United States. We realize that there have to be restrictions of imports from the United States so as to conserve dollars. But I do say this, that on top of the restriction which we have placed against those particular cars, we come along now and put on them an excise tax, which is simply adding insult to injury. It makes it impossible for businessmen to know how to plan.

The same is true of domestically produced cars, those in the Chevrolet and Ford class. Those cars, for which we used to pay about \$1,100, cost from \$1,900 or \$2,000 today. It is ridiculous. It seems to me that the Canadian people have a legitimate right, on that ground alone to complain against the government.

For all these reasons, and for the further fact that this represents just one more tax upon an already tax-burdened people, I am definitely and implacably opposed to the resolution.

Mr. MERRITT: Has the minister anything further to say in defence of his conduct on the constitutional question?

Mr. ABBOTT: Is that a question or a statement?

Mr. MERRITT: A question.

Mr. ABBOTT: I have explained it on several occasions. I do not think I have very much to add. It is pretty clear, and obvious. It needs no defence.

Mr. MERRITT: In other words, the minister has no further explanation to make to the committee? Now, as I sat and listened to the hon. member for Lake Centre and the hon. member for Kindersley, and I saw that now all-too-familiar and facetious smirk on the minister's face—

Mr. ABBOTT: It is nothing compared with the smirk on my hon. friend's face.

Mr. MERRITT: —I thought that perhaps it had better be explained to the minister that tonight he is on trial before the House of Commons for his breach of the constitution.

Mr. ABBOTT: Dear, dear.

Mr. MERRITT: The situation is as serious as that, and cannot be laughed off, or met in

any of the ways with which we are now too familiar; because if the minister cannot give the committee some constitutional foundation for what he has done, then I suggest to him that, as an honourable man, he should resign.

Mr. ABBOTT: Thank you, thank you.

Mr. MERRITT: I hear the minister say, "Thank you, thank you". I have no personal animus toward the minister; I am very fond of him, as are all the members of the house. But I wish to point out to him this, that in the house at Westminster, where they seem to have greater care for their constitution than has this government, the resignation of the Minister of Finance, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, after a breach of the constitution such as this, would be automatic. It would not have to be called for from the other side of the house at all. Indeed, I do not call for the minister's resignation; I suggest to him that if he cannot better justify what he did, then he should resign, himself, of his own volition—

Mr. ABBOTT: Oh, oh.

Mr. MERRITT: And he laughs again. But let me go on—so that our constitution may be preserved. That is the reason.

Mr. JACKMAN: Fifteen votes last time would have done it.

Mr. MERRITT: It is not a question of votes at all. We have had since this parliament assembled more than one breach of the constitution. Always the excuse on the part of the government has been that the safety of the state was at stake or that the emergency situation justified the setting aside of the constitution. On more than one occasion from this side of the house we have been obliged to call the attention of the government to these breaches of the constitution, but this one is the most serious of all.

Mr. ROBINSON (Simcoe East): To what breaches of the constitution does my hon. friend refer?

Mr. MERRITT: That is very easy. Magna Carta was breached by the manner in which the government handled the spy inquiry in January, I think it was, of 1946. The petition of right was breached when the government introduced their Militia Act one year ago. Because members of the opposition called that breach of the constitution to the attention of the government, the matter was set right by the imposition of a ceiling on our armed forces. Ever since the seventeenth century the constitution of this country, which, of course,