

The rules of the House with respect to the expenditure of public money and the imposition of burthens upon the people are in conformity with the practice of its English prototype. All the checks and guards which the wisdom of English parliamentarians has imposed in the course of centuries upon public expenditure now exist in their full force in the Parliament of the Dominion. The cardinal principle which underlies all parliamentary rules and constitutional provisions with respect to money grants and public taxes is this—when burthens are to be imposed on the people every opportunity must be given for free and frequent discussion, so that Parliament may not by sudden and hasty votes incur any expenses, or be induced to approve of measures which entail heavy and lasting burthens on the country.

In the citations which I have given we have the authority of Sir Erskine May, and we have the authority of Sir John Bourinot which we also respect in this House; so I do not think there is any room to debate the fact that I have stated the principle correctly. If I were to say that there is absolutely no precedent for what hon. gentlemen are doing, I might not be exactly correct; I think they might have a precedent. Probably they would find it by going back some seventy years, or thereabouts, and they would then discover, Sir, that the precedent in question was one under which a system had grown up such as they now approve; but that system was condemned by the British House of Commons, and ever since the year 1854 there has been no return to it. Sir Erskine May, at page 546, says:

Until 1854 estimates were not presented in respect of the revenue departments. Prior to that year the charges of collecting the revenue were deducted by each department from the gross sum collected.

That is exactly what is proposed to be done in this case.

This practice, which withdrew the full produce of the taxes and the cost of collection from the immediate control of Parliament, was condemned by a resolution of the House 30th May, 1848; and pursuant to an Act passed in the year 1854 the whole of the net revenue derived from taxation is paid into the exchequer, and the cost of the revenue departments is included in the annual estimates.

Taxation does not differ, so far as revenue is concerned, from the earning power of our public works. The money received from sale of a postage stamp is as much part of the revenue of the Government as a bill of duties collected by the Minister of Customs.

I have said, Sir, that I would like to see public ownership get a chance, and that it is not getting a fair chance by this Bill. There has been some experience in public

[Mr. Fielding.]

ownership elsewhere: Public ownership is in operation in Australia and in New Zealand. I have under my hand the New Zealand Year Book. From it I learn that the receipts of the Railway Department of New Zealand are paid into the consolidated revenue fund, and the appropriations for that department are made in the same way as in the case of any other department. That is the system which we have in Canada to-day, and that is the system which I would like continued as respects these railways with which we are now dealing. Then public ownership exists in Australia also. I have here the Australian Railway Acts, or some of them, and I find that there it is distinctly provided that the receipts from passenger fares and traffic on the Australian railways must be paid into the treasury. They will be found in the consolidated revenue fund—the receipts on one side and the expenditures on the other. Indeed, in Australia the position is still stronger, for so firmly is this principle held—this principle which my hon. friends of the Government have too lightly esteemed—that it forms a part of the Australian Constitutional Act. In that Act it is distinctly declared that all receipts and revenues of the Commonwealth must be paid into the public treasury—the consolidated fund. So by the experience of other countries where public ownership obtains, and by our own experience in relation to our public affairs generally, it seems to me that we ought to have no difficulty in reaching a conclusion that it is not necessary to give to this board of directors in respect of the management of these railways any powers that we do not give to our own departments of the Government.

I think, Sir, that if the Government sincerely wish to give public ownership a fair trial they will not handicap it by disregarding the rules, the laws, and the customs which have been handed down to us by the wisdom of parliaments in the Mother Country and in all the colonies to which we can look for example. It seems to me, therefore, that it is in every way desirable that the Government should not press this Bill in its present form, and to give them an opportunity to reconsider it, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Brome (Mr. McMaster):—

That all the words after the word "be" to the end of the question be left out and that the following words:—

"—re-committed to a committee of the Whole House with power to amend the Bill by striking out section 16 and inserting the following section: