

*Unemployment Relief*

Mr. LAPOINTE: For the relief of unemployment. I claim again, as I did yesterday, that this is against the principles of responsible government as it concerns matters of national finance. I am raising this point not as a legal quibble but only in order to uphold the principle which is the result of the development of constitutional history. When my hon. friend was on this side of the house he was very fond of quoting Redlich on such points as this, and I would like to refer to page 159 of volume III of the same authority. After stating that the first principle is the supremacy of parliament, the author continues:

But there is something more to say. The fundamental principle just referred to secures only one of the great functions of parliament with regard to money matters. Soon after the great change made at the end of the seventeenth century, political experience showed that a second principle must be established before the foundations of parliamentary government could be regarded as secure. It was necessary to gain for the Commons full and unrestricted control over the destination of the money spent, to enable parliament to check its application and to see that expenditure corresponded to the grants made. The working out of this principle led by degrees to the present financial apparatus of the House of Commons. The form of a bill of supply and the division of parliamentary business between the two money committees of the whole house had long been in existence. But from 1688 onwards the development of law and practice in finance procedure took a new turn: the old framework was retained, but a new spirit was breathed into all the forms of financial management, especially those relating to the expenditure of the state, and the administration of the moneys placed at the disposal of the government. The complete realization of the idea of parliamentary control reacted upon the whole organization of financial administration, just as the vast extension of the latter determined the way in which the great task of modern parliamentary government—direct parliamentary control over the whole of the national finances—reached its present shape. The result of the whole process has been to establish in actual fact the vital principle of modern parliamentary government—that of the full sovereignty of the nation's representatives in disposing of the financial burdens borne by their constituents.

Parliament is the organ of control, government is the organ of administration; both must be kept within their respective spheres and each separate from the other, or else the whole machinery will not function as it should. My hon. friend says: We are a government fresh from a mandate of the people. I congratulate him upon that, but that is not security—far from it. There are instances where the impetuosity of governments has led to unwise commitments. This contention is not raised because of any distrust of the present members who are on the treasury benches;

[Mr. Bennett.]

the same principle would apply to any administration and to any government. On one or two occasions last year my hon. friend referred to The New Despotism by Lord Chief Justice Hewart. My hon. friend was very emphatic about the undesirability of giving to the executive powers which should remain within the hands of the legislature. He used some words in that connection which I think should apply to the present government. Speaking of my hon. friend the then Minister of Labour (Mr. Heenan) he said:

I consider the present Minister of Labour (Mr. Heenan) a fair-minded minister, but I do not think that it is in the interests of Canada that powers so great should be conferred upon any one individual under the modern democratic form of government where the temptations for abuse are as great as the powers here conferred.

Surely the powers conferred by this bill will be considered by all members of the committee as being very broad and very great. To my mind the government should adhere to the usual constitutional restraints. They are there to safeguard the rights of the people. Here again I wish to say to my hon. friend that if the majority in the house have rights, and I am the first to recognize that fact, the minority representatives also have rights and duties. They have a duty to ensure full discussion; they have a duty to ensure the publicity of public business and to see that all such business is transacted in the sunlight of public knowledge. That is why I consider it to be my duty again to ask my hon. friend to give to the committee information as to the works which might be undertaken by this government. I refer to new works, because I would have no objection to completing works which were approved last year by the government in office. However, new works which have not received the approval of the House of Commons should be placed before us.

My right hon. leader this afternoon mentioned the national waterways. Under the bill as it stands, however, my hon. friend might embark upon the construction of the international waterways. Members of the committee believe that such an undertaking should not be embarked upon without an opportunity being afforded to the House of Commons to pass upon the advisability of carrying on the work. What is true of this particular work is equally true of all other government works. That is where the safeguarding of the rights of the people comes in. I repeat that no public money can be taken out of the consolidated revenue fund except by vote of this parliament, whether it be by