

I would continue to oppose that principle. I still adhere to that position. I believe that Parliament should know—whether it takes a few more clerks or not, matters nothing—how the money is coming in and where it is coming from, and at the last accounting we should have an opportunity of saying how the account shall be settled. That has been the principle that has been upheld and practised in the old land for hundreds of years, and is the principle that prevails there to-day. It has been explained to us by the hon. member for Shelburne and Queens (Mr. Fielding) that although the principle was departed from for a short time prior to 1854, since that year the practice has been followed in the old country of not spending a single farthing of the public money until the expenditure has been approved by Parliament. I think that is a safe principle to follow. If we are going to relegate the management of our railways to an independent concern over which we have no control, what is the use of Parliament at all? It is proposed that we should put thousands of miles of railway and millions and, in time, billions of money beyond the control of Parliament. If we are to do that, why should we meet here at all? Why not let us meet one year and grant a charter to some private corporation to run the whole business of the country and then slam the door and go home, leaving that corporation to run the business? If the principle is good in one thing, it is good in another. If this proposal is the proposal par excellence that it is painted to be in connection with the handling of railways, surely the same principle holds good in other things and can be applied to every department of Government business. I submit that the Canadian people or the British people or any other well-governed people would not for a moment listen to such a proposition. It is better to stand by the old principle. Let us have absolute control over our own revenue, and let us spend it as the wisdom of Parliament may decide. If section 16 of the Act had said that the deficit would be made good after the money had been voted by Parliament, it would not be so bad; but it does not say that. It says that when a deficit occurs the manager of the company may simply walk into the office of the Finance Minister and say: "I am \$10,000,000 or \$20,000,000 short this year; kindly give me your cheque for that amount, under the provisions of section 16 of the Act."

If the minister should question him about it he says: "You have nothing to say about

it; by virtue of this Act of Parliament I am entitled to the money, you have no further control over it; give me your cheque so that I may get the money." It is the privilege of the minister, six months afterwards when he is bringing down his Estimates to say: "We have been obliged to pay out \$20,000,000." What are we going to do about it? The money is spent. It is a most ridiculous thing to say that we have any control over it at all. We have given it away in advance. We have expropriated this money out of the pockets of the people and we have passed it over to this company. Afterwards we are told that we have the opportunity of sitting down wisely together and reading that so much money was spent last year, and we have simply to pass this ex post facto legislation that will confirm the action of the minister in handing over the cheque. We believe that there should be the most minute inquiry into the proceedings of this company. Where is the machinery under this Act to furnish any such inquiry? There is not a line or a word in this Act to say that the Auditor General has anything to do about it, that the Auditor General can report upon or make any inquiry, and there is not a vestige of authority to submit these accounts to the Public Accounts Committee and let them come under the control of Parliament.

As a last word let me say that the Acting Prime Minister seemed to justify the action of the Government in putting on closure to prevent further discussion of this Bill. The very last man who made a speech of any length was himself just within three or four hours of the application of closure. The hon. gentleman spoke for about an hour and a half before closure was applied. Is it to be supposed by the Canadian people that it was necessary for the Acting Prime Minister to speak for that length of time explaining and defending the Bill before closure was applied? If a proper and useful discussion was being carried on by the Acting Prime Minister then surely there could not have been very much obstruction, because obstruction aims at keeping the House from doing things that should be done. But, within a few hours of the closure being applied it was thought necessary in order that the Bill might be properly understood by the House, that the minister should make a speech for an hour and a half. And yet, he told us to-day that closure was necessary. He told us the night before he made that speech, when the hon. member for Shelburne and Queens (Mr. Fielding) was speaking, that