

*Unemployment*

Without restricting the generality of the terms of the next preceding section hereof and notwithstanding the provisions of any statute or law, the governor in council may—

(a) provide for special relief, works and undertakings under control and direction of the Department of National Defence and the Department of the Interior;

(b) take all such other measures as may be deemed necessary or advisable for carrying out the provisions of this act.

The present administration, with respect to any works or undertakings which are related to either the Department of National Defence or the Department of the Interior, will ask this house in the first instance to give its approval to what is proposed and to appropriate what amounts may be necessary for the purpose. The legislation of hon. gentlemen opposite removed that control altogether from the House of Commons. That constituted the difference between hon. gentlemen opposite and ourselves when they were sitting on this side of the house. I do not recall any exception having been taken by the then opposition to the government seeking to relieve unemployment by providing public works or to its entering into agreements with the provinces with respect to relief. What we did take exception to was the government removing altogether the control, on the part of the House of Commons, over the expenditure on public works which might be so brought into being, and over the terms of agreements which might be entered into, and which involved expenditure of public moneys. In other words, it was the all important issue of preserving control by parliament over taxation and expenditure, a fundamental principle in all matters of government.

Mr. STEWART: Would the right hon. gentleman allow me? I am sure he is overlooking the fact that in the Public Works Construction Act of 1934, and again in the act of 1935, schedules were appended in which each work that was in contemplation was dealt with just as an ordinary estimate in the regular way.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I was coming to that. I was going to point out that the efforts of the opposition to have the government recognize its obligation to parliament did, as we approached the time of the general election, have some effect in the first mentioned particular, but not until then, and then only to the extent which my hon. friend has indicated. The expenditures which we are now discovering, as having been made on account of relief and unemployment and which amount to millions upon millions of

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

dollars were expenditures the extent of which the house had no intimation of until some time after they had been made. They were not contemplated expenditures presented to the House of Commons, in the first instance, in the form of estimates calculated to give the house some indication of the amounts of money to be expended. Might I say quite frankly that because of the methods adopted by the government of the day, and that fairly generally over a period of five years, it is now an extremely difficult thing for a new administration, within the course of a very few months, to bring the public service and parliament itself back again into right procedure and to restore in full the control which this House of Commons and parliament should have over public expenditures. It may well be that, obliged as we have been to deal with all matters in the little time we have had in the interval for preparation, it will be found that here and there it was and may be necessary to adopt a course resembling that which with hon. gentlemen had become the practice. This, however, where it may have or may occur will be found to be, not with respect to matters generally, but only here and there with respect to some individual subject. The ex-Minister of National Defence has referred to an order in council concerning the admission of Chinese. May I say to him that the exception usually proves the rule, or at least helps to prove it. The fact that, after searching through nearly everything done since October 28, he was able to find only this one order with respect to Chinese would indicate that the present administration has been pretty careful not to follow the example of the late administration in removing the control of parliament over these matters.

Mr. STIRLING: Could the right hon. gentleman assert that that is the only order in council passed under section 3?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Well, I must say to my hon. friend that I did not know until I heard mention of it in the house that such an order in council had been passed, and I was somewhat relieved when I discovered the law officers had indicated it was not a legal order, because it had been passed subsequent to the opening of parliament.

Mr. BENNETT: The same day.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: If the hon. member is asking me about my own knowledge of these matters I should say that so far as I know with very few exceptions there have not been other like orders in council. I believe I did hear reference in this chamber to