

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not wish to be construed for one moment as suggesting what a socialist government would do. I am endeavouring to place before hon. gentlemen the position as it would present itself to them if a socialist government attempted to do what they themselves are doing. I do not believe that any government, socialist or otherwise, except this one would attempt to go the autocratic lengths that hon. gentlemen opposite have gone, but I do say that any government would find ample justification in the form of precedent for any extreme act, in the action of hon. gentlemen opposite in this particular measure which gives to the government of the day the authority which it does. That is the point I wish to make.

We all know very well that extreme action of the kind for which hon. gentlemen opposite are responsible does not come about in a day. Arbitrary authority helps to breed arbitrary authority. The enjoyment of a certain amount of absolute power creates an appetite for more in the way of absolute power, and finally absolutism knows no bounds. That is the point we have now reached so far as the Prime Minister and his colleagues are concerned.

Let us consider the stages by which the present bill has come into being. It represents an evolution in the growth of autocracy in this country. And let me ask where is a country likely to land, once it abandons known and established methods of financial procedure and once it does not hesitate to undermine the foundations of constitutional government? There have been three steps. The first was the legislation of the special session. When the special session was called, we had reason to believe it was chiefly for the purpose of dealing with the question of unemployment. That was the impression throughout the country. As a matter of fact, as all hon. members know, the greater part of that session was taken up in raising the tariff and giving to the ministry of the day autocratic powers with respect to it, autocratic powers which they have exercised in a very arbitrary manner since they have become possessed of them.

But in regard to unemployment relief, what was done? Were the known and constitutional methods of procedure adopted at that special session? We all know that in the voting of supplies for any purpose there are two considerations the House of Commons is accustomed to observe. One is to fix a definite limit of time, which relates itself to the financial year, to whatever is being spent.

The other is to designate specific purposes for which appropriations are being made. Whether appropriations be in the form of supply to His Majesty under a supply bill or in the form of grants in aid under special legislation for the purpose, they usually have this in common, that they recognize a financial year, and sums appropriated are designated for specific purposes. Had that course then been followed, we might not now be so far along the way in rejecting fundamental principles as we have come, but it was not followed. The ministry, first of all, did not ask parliament for just enough money to deal with unemployment relief until the regular session might be held. They asked for an amount very much in excess of what was required prior to the meeting of the regular session. We met in September, 1930. They ought to have asked for what was necessary up until March 31, 1931. Then, before March 31, they should have come to the Commons and asked for the additional amount they needed under a supply bill. But they did not do that; they asked for \$20,000,000, and from the records we know that only four or five millions of that amount was spent before the end of the fiscal year. The rest of that money was, almost in its entirety, spent in the following year. The expenditure of a new fiscal year was made under the authority of an act which related to a previous fiscal year. That was, to begin with, a wrong step.

In the second place, instead of endeavouring in any way to specify to the House of Commons where that money was to go, indicating that some of it was to go to the provinces, some of it to certain public works, some of it to be used in the form of direct relief and so on, as would have been the proper procedure, the government did not so designate, stated no specific amounts, but asked merely for this lump sum in general terms for the relief of unemployment. That again was a departure from known financial procedure in the house, and it has helped to lead to much of the difficulty in which we now find ourselves.

The first enactment had this redeeming feature: it had a certain outward appearance of conformity to some of the rules which govern financial appropriations in the house. It named an amount. That was one feature which at least conformed in appearance to what had always hitherto been done in parliament. It is true the amount was excessive. It had no real foundation on any properly considered estimate, but it was named. Moreover, there were words, more or less general, it is true, by which were indicated the uses