

My hon. friend the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Rowell) is a member of a practically new government. The Government which took office in 1911 and the Union Government by which it was superseded, have created so many commissions since that time that, although an old member of the House, I would be at a loss to give a list of those commissions without speaking by the book. I think it is not going beyond the mark to say that at least forty or fifty commissions have been created since 1911. Each commission was created for the purpose of relieving the members of the Government from some of the work for which, with all due respect, the members of the Government are paid in hard cash by the people—the tax-payers—of Canada.

The financial condition of this country is most alarming. I need not repeat the figures quoted yesterday by the Finance Minister. There must be a beginning in the reduction of public expenditure. We must revert to the old Alexander Mackenzie method of practising economy. Only last evening we heard a minister of the Crown, at the head of one of the most important and responsible departments of the Government, namely the Department of Railways and Canals, admitting that in connection with the Trent Valley canal, and the deepening of the Welland canal, the expenditure was practically useless, but, as he said, we must give employment to the returned soldiers of those districts. When he was put to the test, and asked by my hon. friend from Antigonish and Guysborough (Mr. Sinclair), and by my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. McKenzie), how many returned soldiers were employed on the Trent Valley canal, and on the deepening of the Welland canal, he said there were about 200 employed, although the money to be expended will reach a total of over \$4,000,000 in both instances.

There is grave unrest in the country and the people will not stand very long for the wild expenditures that are being made on the most flimsy pretexts. Now, let us come to this new commission. Is it necessary? I have the greatest respect for the opinion of my right hon. friend the leader of the Government (Sir Robert Borden), but, with his experience as a parliamentarian and a minister of the Crown, is it necessary that the War Purchasing Commission which has ended its business, honourably, creditably—I frankly admit—should be continued in operation? Is it necessary that we should now embalm in the statute books legislation which makes of a temporary

commission created for a special purpose, namely, war purchases, a permanent one?

With all due respect to the Prime Minister of Canada, I say it is not going beyond the mark to say the contrary. It is not necessary to make that commission permanent. Having ended its business—the purchase of supplies during the war—it is unnecessary, now, that we are reverting to the old lines of business, to add this new burden on the shoulders of the taxpayers. I do not know exactly what this new commission will cost the Treasury, but I believe I am not far astray when I say that it will entail an expenditure of nearly \$100,000 at least. I am told that an army of secretaries, typists and bookkeepers were employed during the war, and possibly during that eventful period it was proper to have that organization. The purchases were enormous in size and the amounts involved were very large, and it was proper, I repeat, that during that period a special commission should have been created in order to protect the public treasury. But, now that the war is over, the commission has ended its business. I feel confident that it has handled this business creditably and honourably, and speaking from what I know, I state most positively that a man of Sir Hormidas Laporte's standing in the community would not give the commission anything but the best advice, and the people of the country anything but the best service. We are, however, reverting to pre-war conditions as regards the administration of each department of the Government. I was a member of government for eight years, during five of which I was directly responsible, with my colleagues of the Laurier Administration, to Parliament. I know that a minister of the Crown who is simply honest and is endowed with some business ability can manage his department by taking, of course, the necessary safeguards and by exercising the necessary checks upon the expenditure which comes under his eyes every day. I had one of the large spending departments to administer, namely, the Post Office Department. I know that the expenditure of such a department can be honestly supervised with the best results. A requisition is sent to the proper officer from whom it must come before the deputy minister, who is the first officer of the department, and from the deputy minister it goes before the minister. Every requisition must pass through several channels, and a minister of the Crown, if he is honest and knows his business, will be sur-