

Relief Act, 1934

may consider instituting closure, and I do not know that an extended discussion of this matter would do any of us any great good in the minds of the people. Parliamentary institutions are on trial in a sense if we cannot bring this matter to a head before very long. The Prime Minister has said that in his official position, information comes to him from all parts of the world and all parts of the country, and we have no reason to doubt his word, which makes it imperative for him to insist on inserting, much against his will, these words relating to peace, order and good government, and what they involve. If that is the case, and we will assume for the moment that it is, and I admit that for obvious reasons he cannot make this information known to the house and the country at large, why cannot he do what I have known to be done in other countries—call in the leaders of the two opposition parties, honourable men who can be trusted, and explain to them at least the reasons that actuate him in inserting these words? Then if they could go back to their followers convinced that the attitude of the government was one of necessity, the difficulty would be ended. I submit that that has been done before, and it might well be done in this case.

Mr. BENNETT: I can only say to the hon. gentleman that if a crisis should develop I certainly would not hesitate. On more than one occasion I have endeavoured to make known what I conceived to be of interest, but I think it is only fair to say that the leader of the official opposition—I am sorry he is not present at the moment—holds so very strong an opinion in this matter, expressed probably in the terms used by the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, that I feel he would not regard any reason I advanced as being sufficient for the purpose the hon. gentleman has indicated. I think that is a fair statement of it in connection with what the hon. member for Vancouver Centre has said.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): In order that we may get on with the bill I may say that the official opposition have only one more amendment to be disposed of.

Mr. DUFF: Before the amendment is put, Mr. Chairman, may I ask the Prime Minister if it is the intention this year to arrange for public works being undertaken in different parts of the country under this act, or does the government intend to bring down a special bill for that purpose, or to place votes in the supplementary estimates for the different undertakings?

[Mr. Neill.]

Mr. BENNETT: Twice to-day I have said that the government proposed to introduce a bill dealing with public works, and that a schedule would be attached to it indicating what the proposed works were. I did not hold out any hope that there would be large appropriations covering small items, and the hon. member for Shelburne-Yarmouth was quite correct in what he said with respect to that; but I did say in answer to a question that I would consider whether special provision might not be made to deal with items of the character he mentioned.

Mr. DUFF: My reason for bringing this matter up, Mr. Chairman, is this: Under the relief measure of two years ago certain sums of money were handed over to the Public Works department for different expenditures, and the Minister of Public Works, instead of calling for tenders in cases where the amount involved greatly exceeded \$5,000, gave these works out to certain persons in the different provinces without calling for tenders at all. While the Prime Minister has told us that there has been no talk of scandals or undue pressure in connection with the money spent under the Relief Act, I would point out to him that it is in the interests of the country that the provision in the Public Works Act should be observed, namely, section 36 of chapter 166, part 2 of the statutes of 1927, which specifically provides that except in cases "of pressing emergency in which delay would be injurious to the public interest" tenders shall be called for in the case of all works over \$5,000. If it is the intention of the government to give to the Minister of Public Works, as was done two or three years ago, certain sums of money to be spent on relief undertakings, the Prime Minister should instruct the Minister of Public Works to call for tenders whenever the amount involved is over \$5,000. I know of a number of cases where there was no pressing emergency, and where the Minister of Public Works gave these moneys to certain persons and they were not spent for relief purposes at all. People who were not in need of relief, men in good circumstances, were made foremen of the works and supplied timber to carry on the work. If moneys are to be voted under this act the government should be very careful to see that all of the moneys spent go direct to the people who are in need of relief and who want to get work or to supply timber in connection with these works. I would ask the Prime Minister to see that that is done.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): Mr. Chairman, in reply to the statement of the hon. gentle-