

it certain powers. We are in parliament today and asking the House of Commons to authorize the commission and to vote what may be necessary for the work. At the moment we are asking the House of Commons to pass a bill giving to the commission certain powers, and in a special supply bill to be brought down we propose to name a sum which we estimate will be required to enable the commission to function and to ask parliament to appropriate the amount proposed. I submit that this procedure is entirely different from that adopted by my right hon. friend when he was in office with respect to most relief projects. The power to make necessary regulations and appointments by order in council to carry out a specific measure is quite different from power to enact measures wholesale, by order in council, without in the first instance any reference to parliament.

Mr. CAHAN: Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to enter into a discussion with the Prime Minister respecting a blank cheque. I sometimes think it has become an obsession with the right hon. gentleman. The legislation we have had brought down during the present session provides for government and administration by order in council to an extent at least equal to any precedents established in past years.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Not at all.

Mr. CAHAN: Section 7 of the bill provides:

The commission shall, under the direction of the minister supervise the expenditure of funds voted by parliament for purposes of relief and providing employment, and perform such administrative duties with respect to relief and unemployment as may be assigned to it from time to time by the governor in council.

Except in respect of a prospective estimate by which we will vote a substantial sum for this purpose, section 7 makes provision for administration by the governor in council and expenditure of funds by virtue of orders in council to be passed from time to time. Then there is another provision contained in section 10, which I should like to read:

The governor in council may from time to time make such orders and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this act.

I suggest that those are very wide powers, indeed. They enable the governor in council in effect to legislate with respect to every matter which may form the subject of this measure. The provision is very broad, and I do not think very much difference can be found between orders in council under this measure and those under previous relief acts.

That is true, with the exception of the one provision, namely that a limit on expenditures is to be placed by means of an estimate. Within that limit, however, the government will have full power to deal by order in council not only with organization and administration but also with expenditures.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I point out to my hon. friend that under the legislation existing at the time he and his colleagues were in office all that is asked for in the present measure could have been done by governor in council, without reference to parliament at all. There is a great difference between authority which enables the governor in council to go ahead and create a national employment commission, to make all the necessary appointments and expenditures, without reference to parliament at all, and coming to parliament at the outset to obtain authority to appoint a commission. Such a course obligates the ministry to answer all questions with respect to the duties of the commission, its cost and the like which hon. members may wish to ask, and subjecting the commission as respects its powers, to such limitations as parliament itself may wish to impose.

During the days when my right hon. friend held office parliament had no power to place restrictions upon the provisions of legislation of the class I have mentioned. My right hon. friend's own followers were denied that power. All such power was taken to the executive itself, including the right to exercise a free hand with respect to measures of the kind when parliament was not in session. We are seeking to restore to parliament the control parliament ought to have over public expenditures. In order to bring that about, we are submitting before any action is taken concrete measures for the consideration of the house. We are submitting itemized estimates for appropriations, before any expenditures of public moneys are made. I will admit it would be a much easier task for the government to go ahead, as hon. gentlemen opposite did. If however, governments continue to legislate in that way or to deal with relief questions in that manner there will not only be no end to the problem but I venture to say conditions will go from bad to worse. With no control by parliament expenditures will go on increasing and increasing and unemployment as well. The only hope of bringing the whole question of relief to a satisfactory solution, in my view, lies in giving parliament the freest hand to scrutinize its every aspect and to give hon. members every opportunity to know exactly what it is costing the country.