

tion—and you need not read between the lines—to see that he had struggled against this absurd and ridiculous system, and had finally given way, because, in the dying hours of the session, he placed the scheme before the House and said practically: 'There it is; I have given way; and I think you had better give way also in order that we may be able to prorogue the House.'

I do not wish to unduly detain the House, but this is a matter upon which I think the resolution of my hon. friend from Hamilton (Mr. Barker) is most timely. If we are not careful, if we do not take up seriously this question, we shall see repeated our experience of 1903. At the very end of the session, we shall see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) coming down with his scheme and saying to us: Now, are you going to refuse assistance to this undertaking or are you ready to give it, and let us prorogue the House? I want to guard against that. I have given a notice of motion which calls for information in connection with this enterprise, and for my part I shall not give my consent to any continuance of this folly—because that is what it really was—unless we undertake that work and prosecute it as business men who have at heart the interests of the country and not the advancement of the fortunes of a few individuals.

What characterized that scheme? The company had no assets. We have had no accounting of how these vast sums which were given the company were expended. There was no accountability, no responsibility, and there is none to-day. We stipulated, it is true, that the plans should be subject to the approval of the government. That is what we do whenever we grant a subsidy, but were those plans ever submitted for approval to men really competent? Ordinary engineers are not competent to examine the plans of such a vast and unprecedented structure. What really was done, I have no doubt, is that the plans were passed the department, as a matter of course, without careful examination, without any written report. Will the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) say when the engineers of the department found themselves confronted with the plans for the execution of a work, of a kind the equal to which is not to be found in the past—will the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) say that the government engineers gave the plans that careful examination which such an immense enterprise exacted? Was there any written report to the government in detail? Did this government, when it was pledging the credit of the country to the payment of these immense sums for the construction of this bridge work, take the trouble to consult an expert, a specialist? We pay \$25,000 and \$30,000 to lawyers to attend commissions; we give immense sums to commissioners who are called upon to investigate. Would it have been such an extraordinary measure of

precaution for the government to have spent \$2,000 or \$3,000 or even \$4,000 in order to have these plans passed upon by really competent men, men in the old country who are skilled in such construction? Nothing of that kind was done. We parted also with the control and supervision of the work. It was surely most important that we should know, when we were paying \$8,000,000 or \$10,000,000 for this structure, that it was being constructed according to the plans and specifications? But there was nothing of the sort. I can scarcely credit the rumour to which my hon. friend refers, namely, that an order in council was passed naming an engineer to supervise the work and that the order was subsequently cancelled. But of one thing there can be no doubt, and that is there was no supervision.

Neither was there any examination of the past accounts of the company. What would have happened had this great disaster not occurred? There is not a business man or any man of common sense, who will look at the charter of that company, as it was adopted in July, 1903, who can fail to arrive at the conclusion that if the bridge had been safely built, we would have to pay, on taking possession of it, millions of indemnity over and above the amount subscribed by the government. All these side undertakings were authorized by parliament. The company would have to be indemnified for the terminals it had built and the arrangements it had made in that connection. I know that there is a stipulation in the deed of agreement that when the government took possession, it should indemnify the stockholders, by giving them ten per cent over and above the amount of their stock plus five per cent interest from the time the stockholders paid for their stock. But there is nothing in that agreement, I say, which would prevent that company from urging other claims. Moreover, it had the power in virtue of this agreement, of contracting any new obligations it wished to contract, with the consent of the government. But, outside that restriction which was in the deed, I say it was a pit of claims. We should have had to pay large indemnities even outside the amounts fixed in the deed of agreement as to guarantees. And the ultimate effect was to have the work carried on by an irresponsible company. My hon. friend from Hamilton (Mr. Barker) was quite right in saying that, because there was nothing to ensure the company's responsibility. I say we would have been obliged to pay at least twice the amount which the bridge would have cost normally if the work had been supervised and carried on by the government itself.

Now, just to give an instance of the enormous waste into which this system had led us, I do not think I am mistaken when I say that the contractors for the substructure were paid by stock, with a discount of