

giving careful thought to conditions in the west the government undertook the whole cost of relief. We considered that particular aid was in the nature of a national undertaking, and as a result we have spent millions of dollars giving relief to western districts. I listened very carefully to that characteristically entertaining speech with which the hon. member for Melville (Mr. Motherwell) regaled the house. We are always pleased to listen to the hon. member, because his remarks come as a relief from the more studious and serious matters of parliament. I call the attention of the house to the fact that the hon. member, who is not usually inclined to give any credit to hon. members on this side of the house, said in his remarks that on the whole the relief work in the province of Saskatchewan, about which he was then speaking, was well done. Of course, he did have criticism of some of the individuals who were directing the relief, and in that connection he drew attention of hon. members to the fact that certain Liberals were among the personnel. He explained that fact by saying that the government put those Liberals there as goats, to use his own characteristic language. I assure the hon. member and all other hon. members of the house that we had no desire, no wish or intention to place those gentlemen in any such undignified position. The fact remains that the commission in Saskatchewan, a body of citizens with a sense of public duty, have discharged with credit to themselves and to the country, one of the most difficult tasks with which any group of men were ever confronted.

We now come to certain criticisms of the government in connection with orders in council passed under the act. The allegation has been made by hon. members opposite that this legislation is autocratic, that it is unconstitutional, and deprives parliament of its inherent rights to control the administration of affairs. Listening to such arguments one would think that the government had committed some heinous offence under the guise, shall I say, of the administration of this act. Let us see what happened. Four orders in council were cited, to which very briefly I shall refer. In his remarks the other day the hon. member for Quebec East dealt with those orders in council. One was passed whereby the federal government guaranteed certain advances made to the pools. Were we right or wrong? Was that an action for which we should be condemned, or was it one calculated to assist the general welfare of the community affected? Was it a proper act? Was it a wrong act? We have not been challenged

in regard to the advisability of giving that help. No one has said that the government did wrong, but some have said that the order in council should not have been passed. How else could we have acted? Under what other statute could the guarantee have been made? Hon. members have not shown how the emergency could have been met in any way other than the way it was met. The question I ask hon. members opposite, the house and country is this: Was the government of Canada justified in passing that order in council to assist the pools of Canada? What was the effect of it? Let me put it another way: Had we not taken action, what would have been the effect? Hon. members from western Canada whom I now see sitting opposite know perfectly well that had the Dominion government not given some support to the pools at that time, our lack of action would have had a very serious effect upon the marketing of last year's crop. Up to the present time has the country lost a dollar through its relief to the pools? Is it likely to lose any money? The answer is no; the answer is that Canada, through the action of its government, is not likely to lose a single dollar. On the other hand it is fair to assert that the action of the government steadied the situation and saved to western Canada the integrity of the pools, preventing them being thrown into chaotic liquidation at a time when there was civic grief throughout the country. Again I say there is no challenge as to the wisdom of the action of the government; the only quibble is whether it should be done under this act, and they offer us no suggestion as to any other way in which it could have been done. I ask you to tell me what hon. gentlemen opposite would have done under similar circumstances.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Pass an act of parliament.

Mr. STEVENS: Parliament was not sitting.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Yes. It was done to redeem a pledge given by the government to the banks prior to the session of parliament.

Mr. STEVENS: When the order in council was passed parliament was not sitting.

Mr. LAPOINTE: Surely it had been sitting before.

Mr. STEVENS: No, it was not. Now I turn to another order in council prohibiting the export of gold. Was there an hon. member in this house who foresaw the possibility of Great Britain going off the gold standard late in September? No one had it in mind, no one suggested it, not even the leading