

out very grave consideration, and I submit, as a principle of constitutional law, that the step which we are seeking to take is not a sound one.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Shelburne and Queens): I also desire to register my dissent from and protest against the very extraordinary course which the Government are now pursuing. To begin with, it is remarkable that a minister of the Crown should sign a document of the importance of a treaty, and that weeks after its signing this House is to be told: "We cannot obtain a copy of the document itself." Never before has such a thing occurred in the history of the public affairs of Canada. A minister of the Crown is despatched from England—where, I believe, Sir Edward Kemp was—to attend at Versailles, or wherever the signing was to occur, to sign a document in the name and on behalf of Canada. He does so, and we are now solemnly told that the document which he signed cannot be produced. I do not doubt my hon. friend the Minister of Justice as to the nature of that document being correct. I do not for a moment suggest that he has any object in concealing it. I take it for granted that what he has told us of the document is substantially correct, but I entirely concur in what has been said by the leader of the Opposition (Mr. McKenzie) and the hon. member for Brome (Mr. McMaster), that our being asked to give any sort of assent or approval to a document of this character upon a mere statement of a minister of the Crown is a matter that is absolutely without any precedent, not only in our Canadian affairs, but, I believe, in the public affairs of any other nation in the world. I cannot imagine such an important document being conveyed to the House in the form of a speech. We are told: "You must take our word for it that the document is all right." From my point of view—I do not care to enlarge upon it again—it is of no earthly importance whether or not these treaties are approved by the Dominion of Canada. That point has also been emphasized by the leader of the Opposition. But in the previous discussion the Minister of Justice and those who agreed with him on the subject took the view that the approval of this House was necessary. I think I state my hon. friend's position clearly, and I perceive he nods his satisfaction. Of course, unless the Government felt that approval by Parliament was necessary there would be no possible excuse for a special session at this

time. Now, however, they have altered their position. The Minister of Justice on the former occasion—and he is satisfied with my restatement of his position—said that the approval of the German Treaty by this House was imperative, but in respect of the Austrian Treaty he tells us that similar approval is not necessary and that he does not propose to ask that we give our approval. He makes a distinction between the approval of the Treaty and the carrying of it out as proposed by this Bill. I therefore direct attention to the material change in the view of the Government in that relation. When we were dealing with the subject before we were assured, as a cogent reason for assembling this special session, that the approval—I use the word "approval" and not "ratification," which is the act of the King—the approval of this House of the German Treaty was necessary in order to give it effect. Now we have the Austrian Treaty, which my hon. friend tells me is the same in effect, and we are frankly informed that our approval is not necessary. That is one point. The Government seem to be strangely confused over this matter and I am not surprised, for the whole position is a most extraordinary one. My hon. friend, the Minister of Justice, says that the Government only purpose now to take authority to carry out the Treaty; he warns us that we shall not be asked to give approval, and we may save our consciences on that point; he only intends to take authority to "carry out" the Austrian Treaty. But his colleague obtained the assent of the Senate of Canada to a very wide amendment which we have before us. The minister of the Crown representing the Government in the Senate has obtained the approval of that body, not merely to what is now asked in this House in respect of the Austrian Treaty, but he has induced the Senate to accept an amendment which says that the Government of Canada is authorized to carry out not only the German Treaty and the Austrian Treaty, which we have not before us, but any other treaties that in the future may be signed on behalf of Canada. The minister, after his colleague has introduced that in the Senate and obtained their assent to it, now changes his mind and comes to the conclusion that he will leave it out. I am afraid, Sir, the Government are sadly muddled over this business and find it difficult to present it in a way satisfactory to themselves. The very idea that this Parliament is to be asked to give in any way the stamp of approval to a document of