

should not be purchased, under proper safeguards, in the way which has been suggested by hon. members who have debated the Bill this afternoon.

In conclusion, the question is just this: As we have endeavoured to eliminate the suspicion of political influence and patronage in appointments to the public service, is there any good reason why we should not seek in the same way to eliminate political influence in the purchase of supplies for the Government? I suppose if an Administration were desirous of using every influence that might be within its command, and irrespective altogether of the public interest, it might say to itself that a proposal of this kind was hardly worth while, that it could manage things very well as they are at present, and utilize the power which is given in that way to considerable political advantage from time to time. I venture to assert that this is not the spirit in which such a question ought to be approached by a government. It is certainly not the spirit in which we submit this measure to the House. I have a very sincere and earnest conviction that the method we now propose to make permanent, which removes not only the fact but the very suspicion of party influence in the purchase of supplies for the Government, is a good thing not only for the country but for the Government itself, and I hope that the proposal will be accepted in that spirit by the members of the House.

Mr. LEMIEUX: I have followed this whole debate, and I have very grave doubts as to the advisability of the House passing this measure. Of course, I do not pretend to discuss the relative merits of the gentlemen who were, and, indeed, still are, the members of the War Purchasing Commission. I do not know these gentlemen except Sir Hormisdas Laporte, who is one of the most distinguished citizens of my province and enjoys the very highest reputation both as a business man and as a faithful administrator. But that is not the point at issue. I believe in the old saying, which, indeed, is more than a saying because it is found in the Holy Book, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I believe that every man exercising a responsible function coming within the bounds of the constitution should be amenable to Parliament; but I shall discuss that point a little later on. For the present I simply wish to say this: The war is over. It is true that yesterday the Minister of Finance said that as regards the necessities and

requirements of the financial year this should properly be called a war year. I do not deny that at all, but the war is at an end, and the extraordinary proceedings bordering on unconstitutionality which took place during the war and which were criticised and challenged by His Majesty's loyal Opposition should now be discarded. The Canadian people have submitted themselves during those four eventful years to what I would call autocratic rule. Although a Liberal, and inclined to be radical, I admit that the peculiar conditions existing not only in Canada but throughout the whole civilized world justified to a certain extent some of the measures which were not enacted, but imposed upon the good-will of the people of Canada. We have been governed by Orders in Council. Parliament has disregarded some of its most sacred and ancient privileges. We have witnessed in this House members of the Government receiving the emoluments of office during nearly one year without having even received a mandate from the people. I protested at the time against such a violation of the British constitution, British precedent and the ancient and time-honoured usages of our own Canadian constitution. The people resented the autocratic methods which the Government thought proper to adopt for the time being, and I warn the Government that the people of Canada to-day are not in a mood to stand for any such breaks in the future. During the war, of course, the Government had a practically free hand in spending the millions which were taken from the public exchequer for the business of the Canadian army and the Government generally. Indeed, it has come to this, that during the last four years the Government has enjoyed the fullest privileges as regards the expenditure of public money. We had yesterday from the hon. the Minister of Finance (Sir Thomas White) a statement which is now before the whole Canadian people. I may be regarded as cheeseparing, but I say that with the financial condition of Canada to-day as it is the duty of the Government is to put the brake on the expenditure of public money. On this score alone I say to the Government "halt." The amount involved may not be over \$50,000 or \$60,000, or perhaps \$100,000, but I say in all gravity, with a full sense of my responsibility and not for the mere pleasure of digging the Government in the ribs, but as a Canadian, and having regard to the financial standing of Canada, that the Government ought to exercise the closest control over every dollar of expenditure.

[Sir Robert Borden.]