

Unemployment Relief

That makes a total of \$1,958,015.96 over a period of twelve years. These are contributions that have been made directly or indirectly over a period, in the one case, of ten years, and in the other of twelve years in connection with these two services. Moneys will be continued to be paid, I assume, in the regular way under the statute for these services in connection with the Employment Offices Coordination Act, so that they will be in addition to the \$20,000,000 we are now asked to vote. I think my hon. friend will see that it will be necessary for him, if he expects to secure the cooperation of parliament, and if parliament is to maintain control over public moneys, to add to the bill he has at present in mind, some clause which will ensure that whatever payments are made out of these moneys will be for a definite period of time and made in a manner which will enable this House of Commons to exercise that control which it is entitled to have, first of all, over the issuance of grants and, in the second place, over their expenditure.

Mr. HEPBURN: Has the Prime Minister taken into consideration the fact that there are now in the United States thousands of unemployed Canadians who undoubtedly, when public works of the nature indicated in this resolution are begun, will return to Canada? Could there be some system of registration whereby unemployed Canadians now in Canada will be given the preference in connection with any jobs created?

Mr. BENNETT: The matter has been considered and so far as it may be legally possible to deal with it it will be dealt with.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I asked my hon. friend yesterday a question in regard to new federal public works which might be undertaken. He told me there might be some new works. He says that part of the money which is going to be appropriated by means of this legislation may be used, for instance, to complete works which have already been undertaken. He mentioned, for example, an elevator at Lethbridge or other works of that nature. But my hon. friend will realize that these works have already been passed upon by parliament; we have exercised control over that expenditure. What I want to know is whether any part of this money will be used for the purpose of starting new public works as to which the House of Commons has not been consulted. Of course, at this stage we rather desire to have information and it will facilitate the discussion of the bill when it is before the house if we can be given that information. I should like to know whether any

[Mr. King.]

public work in Canada will be undertaken by the federal government without having been first passed upon by the House of Commons.

Mr. BENNETT: I assure my hon. friend that this proposal does contemplate the possibility of constructing new works—in the very nature of things that must be so—which otherwise, as I pointed out yesterday, would not be undertaken at this particular moment. The conditions that prevail now are abnormal. And that question, I take it, also embraces its corollary, which was referred to by the right hon. the leader of the opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King). These expenditures, of course, can be made only through the Auditor General's office; it requires no section of any statute to make that clear; these are payments out of the consolidated revenue fund. Under the provisions of statutes in that regard the Auditor General must, of course, check all accounts; and in addition to that there are the statutory safeguards with respect to tendering, and matters of that kind. But, as I said yesterday, it is proposed to continue existing contracts upon the unit basis upon which they have been let by my hon. friends opposite, in cases where by so doing employment will be provided which might not otherwise be available. And I gave an illustration. It happened to be the illustration of a breakwater which had been brought to my attention. That is, the appropriation for the year is exhausted. The work was let by tender on a unit basis.

Employment could be given to a few hundred men from now until the close of navigation by continuing the present contractors in their work under the same unit basis. That I conceive to be a proper case to deal with, and I mention it as one of those it was proposed to deal with. However, there is no doubt that it would be impossible to give in detail an estimate as to where and how and when the money would be expended, but I can assure the hon. gentleman that as custodians of the federal purse as little money as possible will be expended consistent with the discharge of the purpose for which the measure is submitted. That is all, and that is the reason why I said yesterday, that in connection with the elimination of level crossings and the providing of grade separations, the Board of Railway Commissioners would approve, and we would inform them that we would supplement the grade crossing fund by grants from this \$20,000,000 if it became necessary for the purpose of enabling the orders of the board to be carried out.

I should have said to my right hon. friend something that I think he will at once realize: