

charged, except where the work is still being carried on. For instance, the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Veniot) stated that at Shippigan the money had not been spent and he rather insinuated it was a deliberate political oversight; but sitting opposite to him is the member for Northumberland, N.B., (Mr. McDade), who supports the administration, and who finds that in his constituency there is \$10,000 unexpended with respect to a wharf at Chatham, for the same reason given by the Minister of Public Works—that the work involved a very large expenditure carrying into the future. With the sense of the responsibility that this executive must have with respect to matters of this kind, we did not care to project ourselves into a period of time which was indefinite. When the engineers making their final report indicated this fact the works were not proceeded with.

Then you came to the next realm, which was the work for the approval of which the province itself was responsible. The contact of the federal government is with the provinces, not with the municipalities.

Mr. VENIOT: Do you say these amounts were all paid?

Mr. BENNETT: I am just making the point that they are not paid; that is what I am saying. Unfortunately, they could not be paid because the work has gone on intermittently. Take the work in Quebec city, for example. This is a standard illustration, because the mayor of that city came to Ottawa together with a delegation of which the hon. member for Quebec East was a member. He knew, as I knew—though I knew it better after they had explained it to me—that the severity of the winter there had made it impossible to carry forward these unemployment works. They had been able to go on only to a certain point, and then they had to stop. They said they wanted an extension of time, and we considered that the obligation being created under this order in council, we should meet it until May 1.

Now I will make this closing observation in that regard. There are very few statutes enacted by this parliament conferring any power of an administrative character on the executive that are not capable of abuse. Every effort that men can make to prevent abuse is being made, and as I explained the other evening no action by this government would impose a new or fresh obligation upon the people of this country, other than the continuance or discharge of those provided for in the report made by the Minister of Labour.

except under most exceptional conditions. One of the new obligations we will have to meet is with respect to seed grain in western Canada. We took the ordinary, elementary precautions in connection with it, not ourselves but through the commission and through others who are directing enterprises in connection with the movement of grain, to see that seed might be preempted, or made available. It has not been paid for, but it must be paid for. We knew from each of the provinces what would be its probable needs.

I need hardly say to this committee that nothing so concerns this government as the whole financial outlook of this country. Is there any man who is carefully studying conditions who does not realize just what are the burdens and responsibilities at the present moment in connection with financial conditions? Even the richest country in the world, our neighbour to the south, has a deficit larger than has ever been recorded in any country of the world, amounting to almost two and a half billion dollars, an almost unthinkable sum. With our financial obligations we realize the need for every possible effort to avoid the creation of obligations that are not absolutely essential for the purpose of carrying into effect the provisions of this measure. If the hon. gentleman suggests the possibility of abuse I can only say to him that abuse is possible under any statute where power of an administrative character is vested in the executive. Criticism is always conducive to soundness of administration, and the very criticism that has been made by the hon. gentleman as to the possibility of abuse will be always a factor in deterring those responsible for creating the opportunities for criticism by such abuse. That is known to everyone.

I can only say to this house that to the extent of our ability we propose during the next thirty days to limit our commitments to the minimum consistent with the obligations that already rest upon us and which must be carried out by fresh orders in council, in connection with seed grain, for example, and in connection with the moneys that must continue to be paid to the relief commission of Saskatchewan. We are still caring for many thousands of families out there. It may be of interest, and I think the committee should know that in furtherance of the views which I expressed a few days ago I have despatched a message to the governments of all the provinces for the purpose of enabling us to look at this financial position clearly and ascertain to what extent it may be necessary for the