

stituted authority. The people of Winnipeg, I find, have held that view almost unanimously, with the exception of the strikers themselves and their sympathizers. The people of Winnipeg deserve great credit for the manner in which they have taken hold of certain utilities; they have staffed the telephone and postal services and have been doing the scavenging, and three or four thousand have joined the militia in barracks and done all sorts of menial work, and I say all honour to them. I do not propose to pronounce any judgment as to the merits of the strike. The matter has reached such a grave position at the present time that it is my judgment that they who discuss it without considering its gravity are liable to rock the boat, and I do not wish to do that. The people of Winnipeg of course are greatly exercised over the strike, and it is to be hoped that the question will be finally and satisfactorily solved.

Before I sit down I want to say that I look very seriously on this question of voting against the Union-War-Government on this issue. The Budget is really the vital issue on which a Government exists. If I vote against the Government it means that I want to turn the Government out. That is the meaning of my vote. There is no escape from that position. Even though a small number vote against the Government, their declaration is that the Government should be defeated. In all solemnity I am not prepared to face that issue. In view of the policy on which we were elected and in view of the vast majorities, hundreds of thousands, which were rolled up in the West for the Unionist candidates, manifestly the idea of the people was to win the war, and the Government is still engaged in that great task. So, after considering this question carefully, I cannot bring myself by my vote to say that the Government ought to be turned out of office. It would seem to me rather to be my duty to tender to this House the resignation of my seat than vote against the Government on this issue.

In view of all considerations, I am utterly at a loss to see what other course I can conscientiously follow than support the Budget, even though, like many of my friends from the West, I should like to see certain changes made. The question is not my personal political fortunes which, possibly, are nil; but my duty as a citizen and as a member of the Parliament of Canada at this very critical time. I shall

[Mr. Richardson.]

therefore, Mr. Speaker, vote in favour of the Budget.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Shelburne and Queen's): Mr. Speaker, I sympathize very heartily and very warmly with the desire of the members of the House who wish this debate to be brought to a very early conclusion, and with that object in view I shall try to respond to that very proper desire. Many things that one might wish to say under other circumstances may well be omitted. At an early stage of the session I had an opportunity of participating in a debate in the course of which tariff questions were much discussed. At that time I gave expression in general terms to my views on this tariff question, and inasmuch as the resolution in amendment moved by the hon. member for Brome (Mr. McMaster) is largely, though not exactly, in harmony with the views which I then expressed, I shall vote for the amendment of the hon. gentleman.

There are one or two general questions to which I should like to make reference before coming to what seems to be the main question of the tariff. From one

aspect I am sure that the House 1 a.m. generally will sympathize with the Minister of Finance in the duty he had to discharge in bringing forward the Budget at the present session. He had indeed a large responsibility and great difficulty, and the best that any Minister of Finance could do under the circumstances would surely fail to satisfy all interests. That I fully realize.

The fiscal situation generally, as disclosed by the address of the hon. gentleman, is a very grave and serious one. Possibly from some viewpoints it might be considered an alarming one, though if we have regard to the events of recent months and years, perhaps we could expect no better situation than that which he discloses. Our Budget is running into such enormous figures that I am afraid many of our people absolutely fail to appreciate their meaning. The ordinary man in the street does not quite comprehend, unless the matter is pressed upon his attention, what it means when we say that we have at this moment a net debt—not a gross debt, but the gross debt less assets which are claimed to be good—a net debt of something over \$1,500,000,000, and that when this fiscal year upon which we have entered closes, it is the expectation of the Minister of Finance that our net debt will be close upon \$2,000,000,000. These are vast figures—figures, which as I said a moment ago, the ordinary man has some difficulty in comprehending.