

Unemployment Continuance Act

Mr. BENNETT: After the Scottish interruption, the hon. member may proceed.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): The Prime Minister has stated that the Canadian National Railways would not have this information. I suggest that when the Minister of Railways recommended to the executive council, under the special authority which he had received, the passage of an order in council calling for the expenditure of \$1,300,000, it was his duty to instruct the Canadian National Railways that the government of Canada would be responsible to parliament for a complete determination of every single item in the expenditure. He should have instructed the Canadian National Railways that in regard to this special vote, made under special conditions to meet a special emergency, they would be held accountable to the Canadian government and the Canadian people for every single cent expended.

Mr. MANION: All expenditures for the Canadian National Railways are dealt with in exactly the same way. At present there is before the house a bill asking for \$61,500,000, and in that connection we ask for no more details than we do in this.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): That is different.

Mr. MANION: I do not see the difference. In connection with unemployment relief there has been passed to the Board of Railway Commissioners the sum of \$500,000 for assistance in the construction of subways, and we have not the privilege of auditing that expenditure, unless for some special cause, so I understand. The same thing applies to various works in my hon. friend's province. This government has handed an immense amount of money to the province of British Columbia, which money is being dealt with by the province and by the municipalities, and we have no way quickly of auditing the expenditures. We get certified accounts. We handed over the money on the recommendation of the province, and we are in the same position in this regard.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): I am on record in Hansard as having stated in 1930 that this government could have insisted upon having complete control. I am certain that not a single province in the face of a national emergency would have resented in the slightest degree the most complete and paramount control over all expenditures made by the federal government. In the second place, my hon. friend has entirely evaded—I do not suggest deliberately—the point of my argu-

[Mr. T. McMillan.]

ment. The expenditures made under the special statute of last year to meet a special emergency must be completely dissociated from the practices and customs of former years.

Mr. MANION: The expenditures to which I have just referred are under this act. As regards the subways, it is impossible to get all the details.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): Then my argument applies in regard to subways as well as in regard to any other undertaking of the government under the Unemployment and Farm Relief Act. My argument is this: before we vote under this special statute to meet a special emergency any moneys for any enterprise—subways, Canadian National railways or any other body, including the provinces—we who are responsible here for federal expenditure demand a full, complete and rigid accounting of them. I still appeal to my hon. friend under this special condition to demand from the Canadian National Railways a full and complete report. They can easily, without violating any confidence or doing damage to the railways, disclose who the main contractors were. The main contractors can be corresponded with and they can supply the Canadian National Railways with complete information with regard to the various subcontractors. The subcontractors can be communicated with by the main contractors and the former can supply the information as to who the station men were. We can then find out the prices, spread, entire cost to the nation, and what the poor fellows for whose relief this act was designed, received for doing this work in connection with meeting a national emergency of unemployment.

At six o'clock the committee took recess.

After Recess

The committee resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. REID: Mr. Chairman, when the committee rose at six o'clock we were discussing the question of railway ties, and now that the Minister of Railways is in his seat I should like to ask one question. Would he have any objection if I were to ask the Canadian National Railways for information concerning ties, with special reference to prices and so on?

Mr. MANION: My hon. friend has as much right as I have to communicate with the Canadian National Railways, and so far as I am concerned he may go ahead and get all the information he can.