

but the Government refuse to give it. When we ask what salaries are being paid to the directors of the Canadian Northern system, we are told: You shall inquire no longer; Mr. Lash's Bill is about to be passed under the rule of closure. Closure may be a good or may be an evil thing, but the principle of it as applied to this Parliament is a bad one. Everywhere liberty of action and speech is asked for, and it is a sorry thing indeed that the Government should apply the principle of the curtailment of the right of free speech in order to tax the people—yourselves and ourselves, the people of Canada. For that the Government will answer to the people.

Before my time lapses, I want to say a word or two about what this railway is costing the people. The people have obtained about ninety-eight per cent of the common stock, which has been declared by two officials of the Government as perfectly useless. When the Government are asked what else the people have obtained, they try to make an elaborate argument, but invariably come back to that stock. That is what the people have, and no more. What has the system cost the country? It has cost about \$298,253,263. According to the testimony of Professor Smart, a very able writer whose version was published in the Montreal Star in 1917 or 1918, based upon the then market prices, the company is going to cost the country some \$13,000,000 a year in deficits. The country is groaning under the high cost of living. Investigations are being demanded on all sides; yet you are standing party to the expenditure of the people's money to the extent of hundreds of millions and you are not inquiring where these hundreds of millions are going. No hon. member on the opposite side has taken the trouble, I am sure, of reading the Auditor General's Report from the first page to the last to find out where the people's money is going; yet that is what we are here for. What we cannot find in the Auditor General's Report we try to find out from the Government. We had an instance of that this afternoon. In answer to a question as to where \$115,000,000 had gone, the Acting Prime Minister said: Well, the vouchers have not come over—it would take an awful lot to send them over, I suppose—but the accounts have been audited on the other side and have been declared to be satisfactory. And the \$115,000,000 of the people's money must go. The people are clamouring for a reduction of the high cost of living. Has the Government taken any one step since the begin-

[Mr. Devlin.]

ning of the session to reduce the cost of living? Not one. We are paying a Food Commissioner for reports. We are paying exorbitant sums for a little rag of a newspaper called the Official Record, which contains no real information. It merely gives clippings from a lot of other newspapers; and it is sent out as the Government official organ. In not one line of that journal is anything told of an attempt of the Government to reduce the cost of living. The Government have not studied the question; they do not know anything about it. The Government represents the wealth of this country, the manufacturers of this country. They do not know what the people are suffering or what it is costing them to keep their homes up. They have absolutely no idea of what the people are doing in trying to keep themselves supplied with meat. The people can hardly buy butter; yet the cold storage plants are loaded up with butter for exportation to the Old Country, while New Zealand is supplying the Canadian market at prices lower than those at which we can obtain butter in this country. And why? Simply because the profiteers have control of the butter. They have put it into cold storage, and they are holding it for higher prices; but the Government is doing absolutely nothing in the matter except taxing the people and imposing more taxes. People complain to-day that they are being taxed to the hilt. What will the taxes be after the Government have taken over all these railways, after they have paid for the debentures held by the people of Canada for loans made to the Canadian Northern? I happened to catch this bit of information supplied in May, 1918, in the Senate. Upon a question asked by the Hon. Mr. Belcourt, the Hon. Sir James Loughheed gave the following information. With the permission of the Committee, I will read the passage:

I have great pleasure in placing this upon the Table. It shows securities of a par value of \$69,000,000 securing the indebtedness of \$67,000,000 which I mentioned yesterday.

All this is money which the people of Canada have to pay, for which the people are going to be taxed. Yet, because we protest against it, or at least, because we want to make some inquiries as to how the money is to be expended, my learned friend, the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Meighen), with all the art and ability he is known to possess, is brought into the ring; and he starts a sparring match, and when any man attempts to ask a question, the minister stands up and endeavours, not