

and we on this side of the House hope that the Government will this session, so far as they can possibly do so, bring down their Estimates on the earliest possible day; that they will not in the dying days of the session, when the House will have practically no opportunity of considering them, bring down appropriations of further millions of the people's money.

Final decisions upon matters of national import should not be made by ministers in their private rooms; should not be made without opportunity being afforded to the House of Commons to consider them in the first instance. After all, it is the public business that we are discussing here, and the country has the right to have submitted to it all that is essential in regard to large transactions, before those transactions are finally put beyond the power of this Parliament. I refer again to the Grand Trunk railway agreement. That is one of the largest transactions that this country has ever undertaken. What position are we in to-day? We who sit here in the House of Commons as the representatives of the people have been put in the humiliating position during the last fortnight of reading from cable despatches of approval being given by English shareholders to an agreement with the Government of Canada—an agreement concerning the terms of which we as members of Parliament have not the slightest knowledge. I ask if that is what is owing to the House of Commons; if that is what is owing to the people of Canada? I hope that it is not too late for the ministry to consider the advisability—notwithstanding the fact that at the last session of Parliament they said that they would not accord that right to the Canadian people—of laying on the table of the House that agreement and of asking for its approval, just as they are asking the House to approve of the Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Bulgaria.

Mr. Speaker, there should be an end to Government by Order in Council. Because of the extent to which the Administration carried on Government by Order in Council during the period of the war, it may be difficult for them to realize that this method of Government—the method followed in the old days, 80 years ago—is not the method of Government which we have come to regard as free and representative Government. During the war, Government by Order in Council may have been necessary and may have been tolerated to a large extent by the people; but the time has now

come when, if we are to have Government in the true sense of the word, that Government must be by Parliament and through Parliament; it must not be by the substitution of the diplomacy of Cabinet councils, carried on by Cabinet ministers in their secret chambers, for the free discussions and questionings of the ministry in this House in regard to public affairs.

If we are to restore the deliberative aspect of this assembly, ministers should be in their seats in the House where they can answer the questions put to them in regard to public business. The Prime Minister should be in his seat to answer questions with regard to matters of policy. I hasten to express the sympathy which all of us have with the right hon. the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden) in that, through the impairment of his health, he is prevented from being here at this time. I hope that no hon. member will endeavour to misconstrue my reference at this moment as being in any way inconsiderate. Indeed, I think a lack of consideration was shown by his colleagues in virtually compelling the Prime Minister to remain at the head of the Government, in spite of his protests over and over again that he was not in a position to attend to public affairs and that he wished to be relieved from that duty altogether. It was a mistaken kindness to him and to the country to ask him to assume a nominal leadership when it was impossible for him to assume any leadership at all. I might remind the House that during the period of the war and since the war the Prime Minister as well as two or three of his colleagues have been not merely out of this House but in large part out of the country. That is the system which has grown up, and it shows the indifference of the Government to the method of carrying on Parliamentary representation here. What is happening at this very moment? If what we read in the newspapers to-day is correct, two of my right hon. friend's colleagues are down in New York discussing the business of this country with the Prime Minister.

Mr. LAPOINTE: No truck or trade with the Yankee.

Hon. Mr. KING: Why should we have to go to New York to deal with questions that affect this country? The ministers should be here so that they can answer questions. It is astounding, when we see on the other side an endeavour to revive the old cry "No further truck or trade with the Yankees," that our ministers