

sibility directly back upon the Government. If he thinks one of his colleagues is requisitioning for supplies which are not required he has all the remedies necessary for dealing with the situation.

Mr. COPP: What remedies, for instance?

Mr. ROWELL: I do not think it is necessary to suggest any remedies. If the Prime Minister thinks one of his colleagues is embarking on an expenditure he should not make, the Prime Minister has all the remedies in his hands.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: Is it not restricting the powers of the commission very much to say that they cannot vary a requisition? Suppose the Postmaster General wants a padlock, and mentions a certain make to the commission. He asks for a thousand of one particular make, we will say. The commission know that that is not the best make of padlock—it is their business to know which is the best padlock, because they are experts, but apparently they have no power to say to the Postmaster General that the padlock he has requisitioned is not the best and that they will buy another one in its stead. As I understand it, they must report to the Prime Minister. That seems a very roundabout way, and I think it is restricting the powers of the commission altogether too much.

Mr. ROWELL: Some hon. members have argued that we were giving the commission too much power. On the other hand, it is suggested that we are not giving them power enough. This is the view underlying the Bill. The department must take the responsibility for the quantity and the general character of the goods it desires to have purchased. The minister of the department is responsible to Parliament. He must requisition the supply, and must finally pay the account; he must ask Parliament to vote the money. As the law now stands, he can go out and buy the supplies, but when this commission is appointed he will have to make a requisition to the commission. If the commission had the power to change the requisition of their own motion the minister might come to Parliament and say, "I have no responsibility." We do not think it is desirable that he should have that escape or that the commission should exercise that power. If the commission is satisfied that the requisition is not wise they report direct to the minister to whom they are responsible. They lay the facts before the

[Mr. Rowell.]

Prime Minister, that a certain department is asking for too much or for something that is not in the public interest. It appears to me that this provision maintains ministerial responsibility and ensures the best results in the purchase of supplies.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: The objection taken was not with regard to the powers of the commission but with regard to the responsibility of the minister. The Secretary of State (Mr. Burrell) laid down very emphatically to-night the doctrine that the establishment of this commission does not affect in the slightest degree the responsibility of the minister and the Government in regard to purchases. I want to know if my hon. friend agrees with the doctrine of the Secretary of State in that connection.

Mr. ROWELL: Substantially so. My hon. friend is speaking in a very general way but, as applied to this Bill, I agree. That is one of the objects of this provision. The minister must take responsibility for the requisition. The commission cannot change it by its own action. The commission can report to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister and Council, having the report of the commission, will decide if the requisition is all right and, if so, the commission will have to go ahead and purchase. But if, upon the report of the Prime Minister, that requisition should be reconsidered, the minister reconsiders it, and submits some other requisition and the purchase is made on that basis.

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR: If there is an improvident purchase will the minister be responsible for it?

Mr. ROWELL: Of course he must accept responsibility.

On section 13—Estimates.

Mr. McKENZIE: Is there any provision in this Act by which the purchases will be reported to the Auditor General and the Auditor General will have in his report an account of the various purchases made by this commission, showing the departments from which these various requisitions came and the amounts paid for the supplies enumerated in them?

Mr. ROWELL: The information that my hon. friend has asked for will certainly be furnished in the Auditor General's Report. There will be no change in that report.

On section 14—the supplies that may be purchased:

Mr. LEMIEUX: Should there not be added to this clause something to the effect