

other than to attempt to focus the attention of the house for a moment upon the extreme difficulties with which the government was confronted.

It is true that at that time an appropriation might have been voted, and it was very largely the burden of the complaint of some hon. members that that was not done, but I invite hon. gentlemen to consider this, that when an appropriation is passed the purpose for which it is to be used must be specified, and the Auditor General and other officers of the crown in scrutinizing expenditures under such an appropriation always keep the government very closely to the purpose specified in such a vote. Now under the conditions obtaining a year ago it was quite impossible to determine what the requirements might be. Some question arose as to the amount, and I recall particularly that the right hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King) and other hon. members opposite intimated that if it was the desire of the government to secure \$100,000,000 the house was willing to grant it. At the same time, had it gone forth to the country that \$100,000,000 or \$150,000,000 had been voted for the purpose of unemployment and farm relief it is easy to visualize the effect which that might have had upon the public. There is always a tendency when it is indicated that there is available a large sum of money to feel that such a sum must be expended. The object which the government had in view was to do justice to the situation and at the same time to keep the expenditure to the lowest possible amount, and the government in its wisdom thought that the proposal which was submitted to the house a year ago was the most wise one to suggest. It is true that there were difficulties and objections, but after all the representatives of the people in parliament assembled passed the bill and clothed the government with those powers. I quite agree that in giving the government, as the house did on that occasion, a blank cheque, as it has been described, it at the same time laid upon the shoulders of the ministry very grave responsibilities in the discharge of their duties under that act.

The government carried on under that act until March 1 last. Now we come before parliament and say this: We carried on under that act until March 1 last, and we lay before parliament the result of our administration of the act. We have certain commitments which have been made under the act; that is, agreements have been entered into with each of the provinces and various works of a different character are being carried on

by the provinces with the aid of the dominion, and we ask for an extension of the act for two months, because the difficulties which then confronted the country have not been surmounted and further relief is required. So we are asking in this resolution for an extension of the powers conferred in that act.

Our hon. friends opposite and those who are critical of this course at the present time attack the government, very largely, if not solely, on the ground of the constitutionality of the government's course. But I draw this in particular to the attention of the house, that no serious challenge has been made of the manner in which the government has discharged its duty in the administration of this act.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh.

Mr. STEVENS: I submit that with confidence, and a perusal of the utterances of even the most bitter critics of the government will not disclose, I repeat, any serious challenge of the manner in which the government has discharged its duty under the act.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. STEVENS: My hon. friend from Shelburne-Yarmouth (Mr. Ralston) the other day made—shall I say?—a very powerful speech weighted with keen legal argument about the constitutionality of the resolution, and he brought to bear upon the subject all of that ability and keenness of intellect for which he is noted. His speech was somewhat cynical, I will admit, but during the whole course of it he cited only two or three instances such as that in one case a man with a bank account had obtained relief. He cited a few other instances of that kind. Under the conditions that obtain to-day there is no doubt whatever that many individuals, as was stated very clearly the other evening by the hon. member for Melville (Mr. Motherwell) who were not actually in dire need did secure relief under the act, but this government in conjunction with the various provincial governments and municipal authorities has sought, so far as it is humanly possible to do so, to weed out any such individuals, eliminate any unjust claims and overcome any abuses of that character. That there have been such instances is I think beyond question. I myself have heard of just such instances, and have drawn them to the attention of the authorities administering the act, with the result that very definite steps were taken to correct such abuses, but I repeat, my hon. friend from Shelburne-Yarmouth did not during the whole of his speech point to any serious fault on the part of the