

present we did not know, and I presume the government did not know, how much it was going to spend in any given year. The government remained the sole arbiter of the amount to be spent, and the sole judge of the necessities of the situation. That is the position they occupy, a position of complete autocracy. The government themselves realize that this is rather a dangerous power now that they see two of the provincial governments at least seizing the like powers from their provincial legislatures. Then this government complains. It is very questionable whether the provinces are within their constitutional rights in so doing, but they are doing it nevertheless, and it is questionable also whether this federal government is within its jurisdiction, but they are doing it because they have a majority behind them which will see them through in putting this act upon the statute books.

Undoubtedly, Mr. Speaker, we must have relief in Canada. We cannot allow our people to starve. I need not repeat that the policies of this government have added a hundredfold to their difficulties. Yet they refuse to change those policies. It has been mooted that there is to be a change in policy, that we are to have a right-about-face with respect to the most important matter which parliament will have to consider, the fiscal policy. After four years of excessive restrictions upon trade we will welcome with a great deal of happiness any change in the mental attitude of this government towards this important question. I hope that the report is true. Despite the four years in which they have consistently and persistently voted for the continuation of a policy which is so destructive, I suppose the majority will now right-about-face and support the Minister of Finance (Mr. Rhodes). Perhaps for once I may be able to give them some support and my only hope is that the reductions will be reasonable and be able to cure some of the evils from which we are suffering to-day.

An hon. MEMBER: You are wrong.

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Someone remarks that I am wrong, and I am a bit afraid that I am. I can scarcely imagine that anything so acceptable would come from the other side of the chamber.

For these reasons I am opposed to this bill. I am opposed to the powers which will bring about a usurpation of the rights of parliament. Every once in a while when I think of the monstrous ills of this government and their supporters I am overwhelmed. I am opposed to the actions which this government proposed to take under the guise of relief.

[Mr. C. A. Stewart.]

They have turned right-about-face on every promise they made with respect to this important question and I am going to tell them about it at every opportunity. Had we been sitting on that side of the house they would have told us, perhaps much better than I can tell them. One should not be rash in making promises to the electors. That is the unhappy position in which this government find themselves to-day and they will be in that unhappy position when they face the electorate. The electorate have long memories and it will be a sorry spectacle to see the hon. gentlemen who traversed this country making pleas for support having to justify the stand they have taken in this house, particularly in connection with a measure of this kind. Hon. gentlemen cannot complain if they find themselves in that position because the public has a right to demand the fulfilment of promises solemnly made. I am opposed to the manner in which the government, under the guise of relief, has taken advantage of this legislation to do any and everything and to usurp the powers of parliament under peace, order and good government. Year after year with this blanket cheque the government has refused to give to parliament its inherent right to control the voting and expenditure of public funds. Therefore, I propose to vote in favour of the amendment.

Hon. PETER HEENAN (Kenora-Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for West Edmonton (Mr. Stewart) has referred to a possible change of policy on the part of the government; I think he called it a right-about face. If there is anything in connection with which this government have changed their policy, it is unemployment and unemployment relief. I can recall their statements made on the platforms in 1930 that they were going to end unemployment and take it over as a national obligation. During the special session of 1930 when the Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) introduced his bill he told us that it was a measure to provide work and wages. After a term the government decided that the giving of work to provide wages was too expensive and they changed their policy to one of direct relief. Apparently they have got tired of direct relief and are going to put on a program of public works. In the short space of four years the government have turned right-about-face several times in connection with unemployment and unemployment relief.

During the course of his remarks to-day the Prime Minister said that I had agreed with him on Friday evening, and he seemed to take some comfort out of that fact. Either he did not understand what I said or he twisted