

Unemployment Continuance Act

I shall not weary the house with any lengthy quotations with respect to the rights and duties of the House of Commons on matters of control of taxation and public expenditure and the rights of the house with respect to legislation; but the Prime Minister and other speakers have placed on record one or two quotations by which they support the position they have taken, and I shall therefore give a quotation or two from outstanding authorities in regard to the solemn obligation of the House of Commons touching the control of expenditures. These quotations represent the grounds upon which our opposition to the action of the present administration has been taken. The Prime Minister, in his speech at the time of introducing closure, quoted from Redlich's *The Procedure of the House of Commons*. I hold in my hand volume 3 of Redlich, which contains the quotation given by the Prime Minister. I am going to refer to that quotation before I conclude my remarks, but, in the meantime, I wish to quote from a page that is removed by only a few pages from the one from which the Prime Minister quoted. It is from chapter 4, the chapter dealing with the history of financial procedure, and it sums up in a couple of paragraphs the view of this great authority on the obligation of the Commons with respect to matters pertaining to financial procedure. At page 159, chapter 4 begins as follows:

At the first glance there does not appear to be much to learn from tracing the history of the forms of financial procedure. The motive power in financial development is not to be found in procedure, but in the growth of constitutional principles, in the acquisition by parliament of the sole right to grant taxes and in the further evolution of the predominance of the Commons as the true representatives of the nation. We have already referred to this development, which, so far as it bears on our special subject, was completed by the Revolution of 1688.

But there is something more to say. The fundamental principle just referred to secures only one of the great functions of parliament with regard to money matters. Soon after the great change made at the end of the seventeenth century, political experience showed that a second principle must be established before the foundations of parliamentary government could be regarded as secure.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to note these words:

Before the foundations of parliamentary government could be regarded as secure—

Another great principle had to be recognized, and it was this:

It was necessary to give to the Commons full and unrestricted control over the destination of the money spent, to enable parliament to
[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

check its application and to see that the expenditure corresponded to the grants made.

I ask, sir, was there ever a quotation which came to a legislative body so pregnant with meaning as this quotation comes to this House of Commons this afternoon, when, by the action of the Prime Minister and his government, the committee of this House of Commons has been denied all right to endeavour to check the application of moneys, to see that the expenditure corresponded to the grants made, and to exercise its unrestricted control over the destination of the moneys spent. Let me go on:

The working-out of this principle led by degrees to the present financial apparatus of the House of Commons. The form of a bill of supply and the division of parliamentary business between the two money committees of the whole House had long been in existence. But from 1688 onwards the development of law and practice in finance procedure took a new turn: the old framework was retained, but a new spirit was breathed into all the forms of financial management, especially those relating to the expenditure of the state, and the administration of the moneys placed at the disposal of the government. The complete realization of the idea of parliamentary control reacted upon the whole organization of financial administration, just as the vast extension of the latter determined the way in which the great task of modern parliamentary government—direct parliamentary control over the whole of the national finances—reached its present shape. The result of the whole process has been to establish in actual fact the vital principle of modern parliamentary government—that of the full sovereignty of the nation's representatives in disposing of the financial burdens borne by their constituents.

Could anything be more emphatic as to what lies at the very foundation of parliamentary government, and which, as this high authority says, is the great task, the vital principle of parliamentary government and the greatest of all responsibilities that rest upon members of the House of Commons? Yet it is that right, that duty, that obligation which is being denied this parliament by the bill which we are asked to support at the present time on its third reading.

May I now quote from another great authority, Colonel A. J. V. Durell, C.B., in his *The Principles and Practice of the System of Control over Parliamentary Grants*—the leading authority on this subject. Redlich was dealing with the financial aspect. Durell, in the part I am going to quote, deals more particularly with the constitutional aspect. At page 3 in the chapter on the House of Commons he says:

It is one of the old standing principles of our constitution that the House of Commons should control the finances of the country. That is the