

come to this House; he will, after all, be responsible for what his department needs, and although the commission on account of its knowledge of the requirements of all the departments is created to do the actual buying certain responsibilities will rest with the minister of each department.

My hon. friend urges—and I thought this was a somewhat curious and illogical argument—that in some mysterious way the establishment of this commission would clip the claws of the Auditor General.

How on earth the Auditor-General's claws are to be clipped by a commission of this kind doing the actual purchasing, I fail to see. His functions are not interfered with one iota by this commission; he will discharge his functions in precisely the same way after the establishing of this commission as before. It was a new doctrine, I think, to this House which the hon. member laid down when he said that the Auditor General was the nightmare of an honest minister. I thought he was the nightmare of a dishonest minister. Fear of the Auditor General would not be entertained by an honest minister; he has nothing to fear from the Auditor General. I cannot see in any shape or form how the Government or a minister would be abdicating his functions by adopting practically what every vast business concern with innumerable branches does, namely, centralize the machinery for the actual purchasing of its requirements. My hon. friend in his diatribe on the commission business and on throwing off the responsibility of ministers, surely has not forgotten that the Government of which he was a member established a commission, the Railway Commission—and I have not a word except of praise for its establishment, and had not at the time it was established—which certainly is less responsible than a commission of this kind, because it is far less in contact with the various departments and the ministers. In the whole language used by my hon. friend I have failed to see one argument against the establishment of this commission; I have failed to hear one reason advanced why it would not facilitate public business of the country and of the departments. I fail to see why, to use my hon. friend's words, if it helped matters and safeguarded the public treasury in times of war, it would not equally do so in times of peace. I shall certainly therefore vote against my hon. friend's motion.

Mr. M. CLARK: Is my hon. friend's mind not influenced by the thought that

[Mr. Burrell.]

the Railway Commission has no spending power? It does not spend public money?

Mr. BURRELL: That may be perfectly true, but its various decisions and their far-reaching effects are vastly more important than the decisions of a commission making purchases for departments.

Mr. A. R. McMASTER (Brome): I do not intend to delay the House long by any remarks of mine, and in that way I shall gain the approval of the minister who has just taken his seat (Mr. Burrell). I always listen to him with attention when he speaks, and generally when he replies to remarks from this side of the House his words are a complaint as to the length of the speeches made by us. I wish very frankly and courteously to tell the minister and the House that we on this side intend to take just as long on any subject matter of interest to the country as we think proper, subject, always, to the gag which the majority can place upon us if they desire to do so.

The minister has stated that the argument of the hon. member for Maisonneuve (Mr. Lemieux) was not a businesslike argument. He says that the proposal to appoint this commission is a businesslike suggestion, and that what this Bill proposes to do, namely, to put the purchasing of all Government requirements into the hands of what practically amounts to an irresponsible commission, is something which all large businesses do by centralizing their purchasing activities. I grant that it is of advantage to have the purchasing centralized, but I say that in order to do that, it is not necessary for Parliament to abdicate its power and its responsibility. Suppose the Canadian Pacific directorate appointed a small purchasing committee. Suppose that small committee spent lavishly the money belonging to the Railway Company. Suppose that at an annual meeting a shareholder said to the Chairman of the Canadian Pacific "You are spending too much on this, that or the other thing." What would the minister think if the Chairman of the Canadian Pacific said: "We have appointed a committee which is only removable in a very difficult fashion every ten years. Therefore, do not blame the directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway for this extravagance, because it is the fault of the committee which you and I appointed at the last meeting." Does the minister think that that answer would satisfy the shareholders of the Canadian Pacific? It would not satisfy them for a moment. There is no man in this House