

Public Printing and Stationery Act

statement from the minister. Has that statement been received and discussed? The statement from the minister was to explain why this large amount is in the bill. I am informed the statement has not yet been made, although when the bill was first considered the leader of the opposition as well as representatives of other opposition groups asked for it.

Mr. Bradley: The additional credit being requested under this bill is not in the nature of a grant. It is merely a credit which is authorized by the finance department out of the consolidated revenue fund. As hon. members will realize, the operation of the department is in the nature of a commercial enterprise within the limits of governmental and parliamentary activities. Practically all our work is done either for parliament or some department of government. As I have already said, this credit is not a grant. It has been increased down through the years in accordance with the increases in the prices of materials and labour and the expanding activities following the continuous growth of the nation. Some years ago \$700,000 was the limit of the credit; later on it was increased I think to \$1,300,000, and later on to \$2 million. The increase to \$2 million took place in 1946. Since that time Canada has continued to grow more rapidly than ever and as a result the activities of the king's printer have been increasing continually while prices have been advancing enormously, not only for supplies and materials but also for labour.

We find that today the credit of \$2 million is short of our requirements by another \$2 million. For example, as of yesterday, November 22, we owed our suppliers for materials, paper, et cetera, \$2,265,643. To meet our payrolls for salaries, wages and the like we require \$160,000. Therefore we are in debt a total of \$2,425,643. Our overdraft as at that date in the receiver general's account was \$5,590,137. We were owed by various government departments, which we are entitled to deduct, the sum of \$3,786,943. If we had been paid those amounts by the various departments—we were not—we would have had an overdraft of only \$1,803,194. We are authorized by the act to have an overdraft of \$2 million. Therefore, as of yesterday, we had cash available of \$196,806 to meet liabilities, which I have set out above, amounting to \$2,425,643. Therefore, as of yesterday, we were short \$2,229,837. That amount is owing to outside firms for supplies and materials of various kinds, which we cannot pay. For that reason we require a further credit. As I have said before, this is only a credit, not a grant or

anything of that kind, or roughly \$2 million in order to keep our accounts down to a satisfactory maximum.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): We recognize that it is not a grant, that it is something in the order of working capital and for that reason it may be necessary. I should like to ask one or two questions. The minister has told us that the accounts payable are something over \$2,229,000. I should like to know how long those accounts have been owing. On the other hand he tells us that there is \$3,786,000 owing to his department, and I should like to know why that cannot be paid.

I should like to know also whether any real inconvenience is being suffered in carrying on the business as is. If the minister can demonstrate that any loss is being suffered I think we ought to be quick to come to his assistance. On the other hand I think the feeling of this house, which is a salutary feeling in my opinion, is that we should not accept suggestions of this kind too readily. We had a similar suggestion from the board of transport commissioners a year or two ago. They came along and asked for an amount which I recall was cut down considerably with their eventual consent. It is not necessary to go into the details, and indeed I do not remember them all, but they made a case which we went into with them along with the treasury board, and we decided that it was extremely difficult for them to get along with the amount which they had as working capital.

I repeat my questions. I should like to know whether any real inconvenience is being suffered and the reason this large amount of \$3,786,000 should be outstanding for any considerable time. From time to time we get little glimpses of what is going on, and we understand there are hundreds of millions of dollars floating around in the air as surplus to what is needed, and just at the moment it does not seem clear why these several departments cannot pay their debts.

Mr. Bradley: It is not always easy to get accounts paid by departments as promptly as one would wish. There is frequently a hiatus between the date of the delivery of the goods and the date of payment. It must also be borne in mind that we carry a considerable quantity of what we call work in progress for which no bill has been rendered. We are continuously in debt to the tune of something in the neighbourhood of \$2 million. That does not cause any inconvenience to the government, but it does cause inconvenience to the commercial firms supplying us with materials. We feel that we ought to be in position to