

have been obtained before the first step was taken. If there was danger threatening, and difficulty likely to arise before Parliament could be called together, it was the duty of the Government to inform Parliament of the fact the moment it was called together, and ask for an Act of Indemnity. Hon. gentlemen opposite have not asked for an Act of Indemnity, and have not asked Parliament to thus relieve them from the responsibility of their illegal step. These are illegal steps. Hon. gentlemen opposite have burdened the country with \$2,000,000 expenditure, when Parliament alone was able to vote the money. So there is a more serious defence than the defence of the country, and that is the defence of the institutions of the country, which have been attacked by the course taken. We are entitled to a full statement by the Administration showing what was the urgency that induced them to take this step, and what was the reason for not consulting Parliament in regard to the fact that such a step had been taken.

MR. DICKEY—I do not think I would differ at all with the hon. gentleman as to his statement of constitutional usage, as a general principle, but I am inclined to think the hon. gentleman is forgetting a little the circumstances under which we were some time ago. The hon. gentleman is perfectly well aware of the circumstances that took place early in the year. I do not wish to refer to them in detail; it is not a thing very pleasant to discuss in detail on the floor of the House. But the hon. gentleman knows that there was a state of tension existing, and that it was very desirable, as well that the state of the armament of Canada should not be discussed in Parliament during the early part of this session. At all events, I think so.

MR. LAURIER—I think so, too.

MR. DICKEY—That is the view that I took of the matter. I considered it not as a precedent, I considered it not as an invasion of the regular constitutional usage which the hon. gentleman has pointed out; but I considered it as a national emergency, in which the Government, as the executive head, was fully justified in taking these measures which it judged to be necessary in the interest of public safety, and then come afterwards to Parliament for the necessary authority to pay the bills. It is, I suppose, quite open to Parliament now, if it dissents from the policy of purchasing these arms, to refuse to pay the money. It is quite within the competence of Parliament to do so. But the hon. gentleman, of course, is perfectly aware that under certain circumstances, action must be taken promptly and taken effectually. The question of providing these arms was taken up before Parliament met, and arrangements were then made. I do not think it would have been wise or prudent, in the state of feeling when the House first met, to have given the details of what was going on,

to be discussed by the public. It is all very well now to talk. I think Providence things have turned out very differently from what we feared. It has turned out that our fears were not in any sense realized, but the hon. gentleman can quite understand that a different state of affairs might have been existing to-day, that another turn might have been taken, and that the passions of those on both sides of the question might have aroused to such an extent that they could not have been allayed. The Government's action might have been justified by events which this Government would be very, very sorry to have seen happen. Taking all that into account, I think the action of the Government was perfectly justifiable. It certainly was not in any sense meant to be a derogation of the existing constitutional usages with regard to the executive action without the authority of Parliament. It was done purely as an exigency, and it was done in the manner it was done and without coming down to Parliament and discussing it at that time, simply because it was thought by the Government that it was in the public interest that the course should be taken which they did take.

MR. DAVIES (P.E.I.)—I do not think the hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickey) quite appreciates the gravity and importance of the position taken by my hon. friend (Mr. Mills). The hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickey) seems to think that because there was what he terms almost a national crisis existing, the Government were justified in incurring an enormous liability without consulting Parliament.

MR. DICKEY—Does the hon. gentleman dispute the principle or the facts?

MR. DAVIES (P.E.I.)—I dispute the principle. If a national crisis existed the duty of the Government was to have taken the House so far into its confidence as to ask authority to incur a debt of one million, or five millions, or ten millions, or twenty millions, as the circumstances required. It does not follow from that that the House would necessarily feel itself justified in discussing any details of the course which the Government intended to take. But the point insisted upon is this: that the Government, as a committee of this House, had no constitutional power whatever to pledge the credit of the country to the expenditure of millions, without first having the authority of Parliament for so doing. It is useless to tell me that it would not be in the public interest to discuss details of that kind. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickey) has no right to assume that the House would have insisted upon discussing details which are not in the public interest. It would have been quite sufficient for the Government to have come down and to state that affairs had reached such a grave crisis that they felt compelled to ask the House to give them a credit of so many

million dollars as they needed, and to ask the House to accept their assurance that it was not in the public interest to discuss the details of how the money was to be spent. In point of fact, the crisis might be so grave that the Government would be justified in asking the House for a point blank credit of several millions without saying how they were going to disburse it; and the House might have given them that credit. The House would then determine whether it was in the public interest to discuss the matter. But, sir, the principle involved is simply this: Can the executive at any time it thinks fit—more especially when Parliament is sitting—incur a liability upon the country—it does not matter how much the liability may be—and ignore Parliament altogether. If Parliament once sanctions and approves of that, the hon. gentleman must surely see that Parliament almost dissolves itself. There is no occasion for having a Parliament at all, if it is only to come here and ratify an act which the Government has already done. Take the case of the United States. Would the President dare to incur a liability or an expenditure of millions of dollars without the sanction of Congress? Why, if he dared anything of the kind he would be voted insane and put in an asylum. Do you suppose that the executive of the United States would dare to incur an expenditure of millions of dollars under such circumstances?

MR. DICKEY—If it was necessary they would, and they did during the civil war.

MR. DAVIES (P.E.I.)—And if it was necessary in the public interest that he should do it on a certain day, he would come down to Congress immediately and get his bill of indemnity, just as you ought to have done here. If matters were so grave—and nobody contends they were—and the crisis was so urgent that you could not wait an hour without incurring this expenditure, then your plain duty was to come down to Parliament the day it was called together, take Parliament into your confidence, tell Parliament what you had done because of the gravity of the crisis, and ask for an indemnity vote. You did not do that, but you sent a man to England to incur the liability after Parliament met, without consulting Parliament, without any statutory authority, and without authority from Parliament by a resolution, and after the thing has been all done, you come and ask us to ratify it. My own judgment is, that if you came before Parliament at that time, and asked for this vote, you would have got it, and would probably have got the whole \$3,000,000 without a word about it.

MR. COATSWORTH—Would the hon. gentleman allow me to ask him a question. What would be the effect on the public outside of the passage of a vote for that amount when it would be published all through the country that we were raising \$3,000,000 to arm our forces?