

about the piracies of bankers and all that sort of thing, but I do not see them now on their feet making an attack that they could make here where it would be more effective. I am rather surprised to find that is so.

I am even more surprised with the reply made by the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Rhodes). Of course I must forbear from criticizing his speech too severely owing to the humble confession he made at the outset of his remarks, an implied confession, at least, that he knew absolutely nothing about the subject. When a man, either in the House of Commons or elsewhere, makes that frank statement, it would be cruelty on the part of anyone to follow with a ripping speech of criticism, so he has disarmed me at once. I also noted the implied sarcasm of the reference to someone who had discovered all the people in the world who knew about banking and had not included among them any Canadians. I would suggest that the gentleman who wrote the article or made the speech in which that statement was contained should certainly have included the Prime Minister of this country (Mr. Bennett), even if he forgot the hon. members in this corner and the Minister of Finance. But it has always been part of the superstition and camouflage with which finance is surrounded to assert that it is a subject impossible to understand, therefore we must leave it entirely to those in whose hands now lies the power to deal with the financial affairs of this country. May I say to the Minister of Finance that if we discovered nothing else during the investigation at the last revision of the Bank Act, we did discover that the bankers did not know anything about finance at all. Their statements of ignorance stand in the records of the committee investigating the subject, to be seen by anyone who wishes to examine them.

In spite of the supposed wisdom that surrounds those who handle finance, and in spite of the suggestion that it is too profound for the lay mind, I venture to say it is not nearly as profound as hon. members sometimes suggest. I would further say that it is certainly within the compass of any average mind to understand at least the general principles of the financial system now in vogue, and to trace to the application of those principles some of the greatest evils and greatest difficulties with which the modern world has to contend in its economic and social life. The Minister of Finance suggests that since the resolution only asks that the government give immediate attention to taking control of finance, that is now being done, inasmuch as the Bank Act and the Finance Act will come

[Mr. Irvine.]

up for consideration and revision during the present session. If that is so, then I assume that the government is accepting the resolution, because if they are already determined to do what the resolution asks for I cannot see that the minister has any reason to reject it.

But let me point out to the minister in that connection that the revision of the Bank Act is not nearly as important as the way in which it will be revised. Revision does not necessarily include a discussion of whether or not finance in Canada should be taken out of the hands of the individuals who conduct it for profit and be handled by the state or by somebody created by the state and instructed so to handle money that it may carry out its specific economic function of facilitating the production and distribution of goods within the nation of Canada. I say there is a very great difference between the subject matter of this resolution and the mere revising of the Bank Act. I wonder whether we will be allowed to discuss the wisdom or otherwise of nationalization of banking when the question of the Bank Act comes before the house. I want to make clear that the thing that is of most interest is not the mere fact of revising the Bank Act. It is not enough for us that we stroke the t's and dot the i's of that act and make insignificant alterations here and there; the significant thing for us is to know what is going to be the basis of our financial system during the next ten years, what shall be the objective of the financial institutions which we set up in this country, in relation to the economic and industrial requirements of the state. These are the questions that we are interested in, and the questions embodied in the resolution so eloquently moved by the hon. member for Camrose (Mr. Lucas). The resolution is predicated upon a well known, and I think indisputable fact, that it is the junction of the state to handle the financial affairs of the state; that the right and power to issue currency and to control credit originally was vested in the state, and constitutionally as far as we know is there yet. But something has happened in Canada. I am not clear as to who made it happen, nor do I know the intricacies of the process by which it was brought about, but it does appear now that the authority to control credit is no longer in the hands of the state, at least directly. It has been delegated to another authority. That authority is permitted now to carry on the credit and financial services of the state for private gain. If you take up an ordinary bank note—those who are fortunate enough to have any of them—and look at it you will discover that the king's head no longer appears thereon, but the heads of bankers.