

so sharp in financial affairs as may be the hon. Minister of Finance, that, if the Canadian Northern should pass into the hands of a receiver, it would be taken at its actual value by whatever company absorbs it. Now, will the Canadian Government absorb the Canadian Northern at its actual value?

The Government may say yes, but every one entertains a doubt about it. Should not this doubt be cleared up? Should we not have a formal statement in order to reassure public opinion? I will go further than any other member on this side of the House into the discussion of that transaction—useless to say that I am now speaking in my own name—in the face of the present conditions, when we are asked to purchase 9,500 miles of railroad subsidized by the provincial governments, by the federal government and by the municipal councils, it means to me that the Government should do everything in their power in order to reassure public opinion which has been stirred up.

Do not play with edged tools. In your administration, as well as in your legislation, you should show as much prudence as any business man should use, especially the prudence of a business man, for in a critical period as the one we are now going through, he is obliged on account of the position he holds, to reassure the public opinion which is stirred up.

It is a very easy thing to say to the Montreal financiers, for instance, who are protesting against this deal, it is most easy to tell them as the Solicitor General has answered them: that they are Montreal people, that Montreal is against conscription, that conscription has been voted and that the Canadian Northern Railway Bill will also be adopted.

Well, let us see. Should an honourable gentleman, in the position of the Solicitor General—with all the responsibility of his position, with the responsibility he has in the Cabinet, being one of the advisers of His Excellency the Governor General, being one of the main springs of the Cabinet who have in their hands the administration of the public weal—should he so express himself? I ask you whether that is an argument to offer to men who, having opinions similar to those held by the minister now on the Treasury benches, consider with awe and apprehension the Bill we are now dealing with. At present, public opinion is overexcited and rightly so; public opinion demands why this Bill in the last days of a Parliament almost dying—which is now in session because one

[Mr. Gauthier.]

year's extension has been granted it—why bring up such a Bill in the last days of the session? But what is worse than all that, in my opinion, is the fact of the Government, through the Minister of Finance, taking upon themselves the task of imposing this measure upon the House by resorting to the very means by which they can gag the Opposition.

Every one throughout the country, is saying that our press is no longer independent. Everybody says so. When men of high standing have reached the conclusion and say, not in low tones, but very loudly that public opinion has no longer any information from the press of this country, and that the Government, who have in their hands the destinies of Canada, are trying, during the last days of a session, which has lasted some eight months, to pass this Bill under the closure system, do you believe, Mr. Chairman, can the Government believe for one moment, that public opinion will be quieted? (It is possible that the transaction may be disputable; it is possible that, from the Government's point of view, the transaction be necessary; it is possible that, with the insight particular to the ministers and especially to the Minister of Finance, it is possible, I say—and I am only a party man—but, after all, I cannot understand why some men assume, without any reason, such a responsibility as that attached to the passing of this measure, without having imposed upon them the imperious necessity of assuming such a responsibility. But, why then, if necessity demands that the Government pass this measure, should the Government be forced to do more than their duty? By imposing the closure, is not the Government doing more than their duty? I answer yes.

The Government come before the House, they explain their Bill, they defend it with General—with all the responsibility of his this measure, who is the Minister of Finance, and all the reasons he has set before us may have their bearing. But we who represent the people after all, we contend that we have not had sufficient explanations. Are you going to satisfy public opinion by preventing us from speaking? Is that a fair way of reassuring those who stand in awe? Is that the way to restore public confidence to say to those who demand further explanations: you are not satisfied with what we have given you, you demand further explanations, we refuse to give you them; more than that, we shall take advantage of the regulations we have ourselves had adopted, and we shall impose that measure upon you, willy-nilly.