

taken which would relieve the Government of responsibility. Then I understand from the Minister that the choice of the particular rifle, the Lee-Enfield, was a Government measure?

MR. DICKEY—Oh, yes.

MR. CASEY—That was my chief objection to this whole expenditure, and it has been largely disposed of by the explanation the Minister has given. My criticisms, then, so far as they are criticisms, will have reference to the policy of the Government in each particular.

I do not know whether I should not have made the objection first, that the Government have begun at the wrong end with this expenditure. They should have taken the vote in the first place, before authorizing the expenditure at all. They should have had the fullest discussion in this House of what they proposed to do, before they did it, and not afterwards. It appears to be too late now, with regard to this \$1,625,000 at all events, for us to say whether we want to spend it or not, because the Government are in honor bound, committed, as far as the Militia Department has committed them, to this transaction. And, after that has been done without consulting the House or saying a word about it, except that they were going to get a certain number of rifles of a certain pattern, the Government come and ask us to foot the bill. I cannot go further without denouncing that action on their part as utterly unconstitutional. If a war had broken out, such as the rebellion in the Northwest, the Government might have been justified in incurring whatever expense was necessary for the public safety; but, in time of profound peace, when it is merely a question of renewing the equipment of the militia all round, to authorize an agent to expend over \$1,500,000 without giving any particulars to Parliament, or asking Parliament for a vote of money, is an utterly outrageous and unconstitutional proceeding.

If the Government undertook to spend that much money on a public work of any kind in the same way, what denunciations of it would we not have heard all over the country? In fact, the statute law of the country is such that they could not spend it in that way on a public work, without first obtaining the authority of Parliament. I am very much in doubt whether they have any legal authority to commit us to the expenditure either. I am not discussing now the particulars of the expenditure, or what should or should not be done in the way of purchases. I am discussing the policy of expending that amount of money without asking the consent of Parliament or having an opportunity for it. I very seriously doubt whether the Treasury is or has been bound by anything that the Government have done under these circumstances; but, as far as the Militia Department could bind the Government, it has

bound them, without the shadow of an authority from Parliament for that expenditure.

As I have said, this is a time of peace, and the expenditure of this money is purely a question of policy and not a question of necessity or emergency. When this House met, the Government were not ready with the Remedial Bill; they were not ready with a lot of things that had been spoken of; and if they wanted this money spent immediately, why did they not in the early days of the session bring down this resolution, instead of bringing it now at the end of the session. If there were any possibility of there being what is vulgarly called a "nigger in the fence"—if there were any possibility of there being a contract to be "sweated" in connection with this transaction, the circumstances would amply justify us in suspecting the presence of that colored individual, and that sudorific process. We are told that this money has been spent through the British War Department. I want to know what that means? Were these stores bought from the British War Department?

MR. DICKEY—Yes. There is a contract signed between the British War Department and our agent.

MR. CASEY—All the harness is bought from the British War Department, and not from any private contractor?

MR. DICKEY—Yes.

MR. CASEY—I do not understand whether it is ordered by the British War Department, or is of Government manufacture.

MR. DICKEY—We do not know where it comes from at all. We get it from the War Department, and our contract is with them.

MR. MILLS (Bothwell)—When was the contract made?

MR. DICKEY—On March 4th.

MR. MILLS (Bothwell)—And under what statutory authority? The Minister of Finance said there was statutory authority for this?

MR. DICKEY—He spoke of statutory authority to borrow, if this resolution passes.

MR. MILLS (Bothwell)—I understand the Minister of Finance to say that there was statutory authority.

MR. FOSTER—No, we wanted to get statutory authority by this resolution.

MR. CASEY—Under what authority was the contract signed?

MR. DICKEY—That is a legal question. I suppose?

MR. CASEY—I am asking the Hon. Minister of Justice, and he ought to know.

MR. DICKEY—I think the hon. gentleman takes the right view of it. The country and the Government are committed to it as far as the Department of Militia can commit them. We need not go back to the circumstances under which the steps were taken at the time. They were not as quiet as now.

MR. CASEY—The Hon. Minister admits that the contract is not binding until it is confirmed by the House.

MR. DICKEY—I do not at all.

MR. CASEY—That is the necessary inference from his statement. I asked under what authority the contract was signed, whether statutory or otherwise, and he is unable to tell me. He admits there is no authority, that my impression of the case was correct, and that the country was committed to this bargain only so far as the Department of Militia was concerned. That is, as a matter of policy, the Government are committed to it through the Department of Militia; but I am glad to see that the Government, as such, are not committed to the contract, that it is not a binding contract, and that we are at full liberty to discuss it as if the formality of signing it had not taken place. In other words, the money could not be recovered, under that contract, as it stands, so that the Government have gained nothing by the rather sharp practice of signing the contract first, and coming to ask us for the authority afterwards. That, I say, is the only possible inference from the statement of the Hon. Minister of Justice himself.

We come now to consider the question of those very stores, knowing that there is no valid contract for them. I protest against asking Parliament in the last few days of its existence, led by a Government in the last stages of its existence, to vote an enormous sum such as that asked for in this case. No such sum should be spent without a royal commission—without consulting, not only Gen. Gascoigne, but militia officers all over the country, such as my hon. friend from Muskoka (Mr. O'Brien), my hon. friend from South Simcoe (Mr. Tyrwhitt), and other militia officers, in and out of the House on the subject.

MR. DICKEY—We consulted the War Office.

MR. CASEY—The War Office has not the spending of our money. It has not the knowledge of the needs of Canadian volunteers, and has not the knowledge of our people; it has not the knowledge not only of our needs but of our capacities for payment, that those should have who arrange for the spending of \$1,600,000 of our money, not to mention the larger sum. It is not the War Office gentlemen who should be consulted in connection with the equipment of Canadian militia, but it is the peculiar circumstances of this country and the men who are to command our forces in action, if they are ever to be in action, and the men who are to use the arms. It is all very well to consult the War Office about the merits of the different arms, because they have experts in these matters, though I notice that their experts change their opinions very frequently. But on the policy of the equipment