

legislating has been on some of the problems that have since arisen. But that was the situation with regard to the special session that was called to deal with the question of unemployment.

Let us consider the last session. The last session was a much longer one. Unemployment had become a still greater problem in Canada. From the beginning of the session until within the last few weeks of its close, I repeatedly asked my right hon. friend what his policy was with respect to unemployment, what he meant when he said that he would end unemployment, what measures he was going to introduce into parliament to redeem that promise and obligation, but I received no reply. When we endeavoured to discuss unemployment, the rules of the house were resorted to in order to make it impossible to proceed with the discussion at any length. We were told by the Prime Minister that the cabinet was the board of directors of the nation. I want to repeat what I said to the Prime Minister at that time in regard to that remark. The cabinet is not the board of directors of the nation's affairs. This parliament, this House of Commons, is the board of directors of the nation's affairs. The cabinet is a committee of the House of Commons, but there are assembled here representatives from all parts of this country who have a knowledge of the conditions with which their constituents have to contend and how those conditions are to be met, much more complete than that which can be possessed by any individual group of men in this house. If parliament stands for anything at all; if the House of Commons, as the forum of the people's representatives, means anything at all, then the people are entitled to hear not only the members of cabinet with respect to their measures, but all hon. members of the House of Commons; and ample opportunity should be given to them to discuss the various measures and subjects of importance.

As I said, at the last session we had little or no opportunity to do this. On the other hand, time and again the customs, traditions, and practices of the House of Commons, were set at naught. In voting public money it has always been customary for a ministry to state the specific object for which moneys are needed, and to seek the appropriation of a specific amount. That is the way in which the House of Commons holds its control over expenditure. What did hon. gentlemen do? They waited until the end of the session, when everyone was well nigh exhausted after several months of the sitting of the house,

and presented a bill giving the right to deal with unemployment relief and other matters as they pleased. They secured in this way a blank cheque which they might fill in to any amount and which would enable them to take out of the public treasury, without any further control on the part of parliament, whatever sums of money they wished to spend to that end from that time until the present.

This setting at naught all the practices of British parliamentary procedure, this riding rough-shod over provisions which have been time-honoured and which exist for the protection of the people of the country, is something that must not be further continued, and if there is an effort to continue it, there will be very strenuous opposition from this side. At a time like this we do not wish to make matters more difficult for the government than they are; we are anxious as far as possible to cooperate with them, but it takes two to cooperate, and there will have to be a disposition on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite to permit a free expression of opinion from all sides of the house if they wish to have the cooperation of all the members to the degree to which at such a time as this it is desirable to have it.

While I am speaking on the rights and privileges of parliament may I in this connection refer to a remark made by my right hon. friend on Friday last? When he was speaking, I did not catch the significance of what he said or I should have very sharply taken him to task at the moment.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Hon members may smile. Perhaps the privileges of parliament are a matter of indifference to them; but if they will bear with me for a moment; if they are upholders of the constitution, I think they themselves will be among those who will agree with what I have to say. It has always been understood that the members of each of the houses of parliament are the custodians of their respective rights and privileges. From the days of magna charta it has been understood under the British constitution, apart from parliament altogether, that any free man has a right to be judged by his peers, and is entitled to the protection of the law of the land. Everyone knows, so far as the Senate is concerned, that that body is the custodian of its own rights and privileges, and when matters have been referred to that honourable body, no member of the House of Commons has any right even to so much as publicly comment upon what is there taking place. Yet, at a