

to register the decrees of the government, or the executive. We are living in an age where more and more it is theoretically declared and held that public expenditures should be initiated by the government and should be submitted for fair and efficient discussion to the House of representatives who have the final authority in the matter. Now can we undertake any such discussion of these estimates at the present time? That cannot be done. The Prime Minister may say, well, you have got the time ahead of you, go on and discuss. That is very easy to say, but with the country as it is, what is the use of discussing if we cannot gain the attention of the country? Will the Prime Minister say: Well, if the country does not care, why should you? That will not be an answer that any statesman will give, I am sure. But the country, after six months session of a parliament whose days have been long drawn out, inevitably loses interest and spirit foregoes any careful attention of what is going on in the House. Nothing but a tremendous sensation could gather and fix attention of the country upon what parliament would do from this to the time of prorogation. No opposition and no government could carefully discuss and instruct the public with reference to its view as to public expenditures, unless the country were in a condition where it could fairly well take cognizance of the position that we take, and of the views that we set forth. Now that is absolutely impossible. The country is not in the mood to listen to criticisms at the present time, not in a mood to listen to anything which government or parliament may do at the present time. Nor is the House prepared to do it. It is not physically prepared to do it, it is not mentally prepared to do it. So there are just two things that happen. You have to have the opposition roped in with you and to assent to these expenditures, which is unfair; or you simply put the opposition where they must wash their hands of the entire thing, and with reference to such estimates brought down in such a way simply to throw the whole responsibility upon the government. But if physical powers endure so long, it is open to us to have a promise from the government that they will not be guilty in that particular and to that extent again. Well, that is a harsh way in which to make an opposition act. And so, look at it from whatever light you can, it is unfair, it is not according to the principles of good government, and cannot be excused upon any principle whatsoever.

Now this is the situation in which we are. We have to let these things go through sooner or later. There can be no fair discussion or criticism of them. Then we may be told: Well, where is your opposition to them? Where are your resolutions? And where are the particular points that you raised in reference to them? As they are non-existent it may be supposed that there

is no basis for them. Therefore the opposition have joined with the government and they have no case before the country. That may be said, and unfairly be said. I do not think I have treated this matter in an unfair way, I do not think I have treated it in a heated way. But in some way or other is it not necessary that these things should be put a stop to? Is it not necessary? And what is to prevent the government just now from crying peccavi! in a good honest tone, and declaring that they never hope to be pardoned again if they do the same thing after having been let off this time. In some way the attention of the House and the country must be called to it; therefore I beg leave to move that for the motion which is now being put, the following be substituted:

This House desires to enter its earnest protest against the action of the government in keeping back until the closing hours of the session, estimates amounting to nearly \$14,000,000, one-sixth of the total for the year, and thus precluding any fair and effectual criticism with respect to the proposed public expenditure, and continuing a practice highly prejudicial to the public interest.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Minister of Finance). Mr. Speaker, in so far as my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) asserts the principle that we should all labour to have proposed expenditures brought before the House at the earliest possible time, we need not take exception to his views, but I am inclined to think that he magnifies the difficulties of the situation and makes the matter certainly very much more grave than there is any reason for regarding it. Let us look at the facts. The House has been in session for several months and has been engaged for some considerable time in the discussion of matters which were regarded as of the greatest urgency. We regarded these matters of sufficient urgency to give them priority over all others, practically speaking, and hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House have themselves excelled us in that, because they have repeatedly told us that these matters that have been engaging the attention of parliament were matters of the greatest importance, far exceeding anything we have been dealing with in recent years. Therefore, no apology, I presume, will be needed for having occupied the attention of the House with these great measures, even to the disadvantage of some other things. So I think there has been no particular ground for complaint in that respect. If the House has not been called upon to deal with supplementary estimates until the present time, in the meantime the House has been busily employed, and this has been one of the most arduous sessions within my personal experience.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Even if we were discussing some other matters, why could you not have brought these estimates down so that we should have them before us?