have had a good deal to say about their sympathy with the plain people. I propose to make this matter an issue between this Government and the right hon. leader of the Opposition, and the hon. gentleman from Edmonton, before the plain people. Is this loyalty to the West in connection with the cement famine a mere lip loyalty, or is it a real loyalty towards the cement merger? What are the facts? The people of this country will desire to know, and will ask my hon. friend from Edmonton to explain his position in this regard. As I understand, in no part of Canada is the question of cement a more important one than in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and yet we find hon. gentlemen opposite repudiating the action of the Government, and criticising what they did to give relief to the people of the West under circumstances of an extreme cement famine.

Mr. OLIVER: I would ask the hon. gentleman to correct that statement.

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): I will withdraw it if the hon. gentleman will satisfy me in what respect I have made an error.

Mr. OLIVER: The objection made to the action of the Government was as my hon. friend himself stated at the beginning of his remarks that the reduction was made for the purpose of influencing an election, and not for the benefit of the people.

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): What evidence has my hon. friend of that? Before I conclude I will convince even my hon. friend that his suspicions are entirely baseless, and I challenge him to prove that the Government's action was not soundly based upon the information before it.

Mr. OLIVER: I am accepting everything the hon. gentleman said before he undertook to state what the leader of the Opposition had said, and what I had agreed with. The hon. gentleman's statements in this respect do not conform to my understanding of what the leader of the Opposition said and what I agreed with.

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): Does my hon. friend or does he not object to the action of the Government in cutting one-half off the duties on cement last June?

Mr. OLIVER: I do object to the Government having put the duty on cement in October.

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): Does my hon. friend not know—and if he does not he should know—that the Government's action was taken under the authority of a statute for which the late Administration was equally responsible with the Government which followed it? Does he not know that this Government is subject to law, and can act only in accordance with the laws of this Parliament? Does he not know that permission to reduce the duty upon any commodity is only granted by the statute in cases where the Government considers it advisable, in the public interest, to make such reduction? A certain situation existed in June, and the Government made a cut in the cement duties for the entire building season. At the end of the season the necessity for this no longer existed, and if this Government had done anything else than to allow the cement duties to go back at the end of October, they would not have been acting properly under the authority conferred by the statute.

Mr. OLIVER: Mr. Speaker, I desire to correct a statement made by my hon. friend, and it is this: that to-day those who require cement in large quantities are making their contracts for delivery next spring, and that those contracts are subject to the duty as it has been fixed by the action of the Governor in Council.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): If the same conditions exist to-day as existed last June, when we were memorialized by boards of trade and building exchanges throughout the West, as well as in certain parts of the East, it is a very extraordinary thing that nobody except my hon. friend has, to my knowledge, raised any protest against the cement duties being resumed as they were at the end of October last.

Mr. E. M. MACDONALD: What has the hon. Minister of Finance to say in regard to the imputation made against the Government by his old friend in the cement business from Owen Sound?

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): Sometimes there is a question as to who is one's old friend. I have no doubt whatever that the gentleman who wrote that letter to the right hon. the Prime Minister intended it for publication, and that it should be made use of by the right hon. leader of the Opposition and some of his followers just as it has been. But what is the evidence apart from that letter? Solely the fact that the cement famine in the West and in other parts of Canada chanced to synchronize with the elections in Saskatchewan.

Mr. SPEAKER: May I ask hon. members to observe the rule of adhering to the question under discussion?

Mr. WHITE (Leeds): The basis of the letter which was addressed to my right hon. friend the leader of the Government was a statement to the effect that an assurance had been given to the cement manufacturers by the hon. Minister of