

again be introduced in an amendment to the motion under consideration. The House has apparently passed upon that subject on the disposition of a former amendment. It does not refer to any matter of definite consequence, but it is a repetition of something which has been disposed of already on a former motion.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Accompanied by a different illustration.

Mr. SPEAKER. It does not say the illustration refers to that portion at all. However, for the moment I am not able to decide absolutely that it is out of order, but I would like that point to be considered in dealing with the next amendment, if there is to be one. The question is on the amendment.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Minister of Finance). I would not enter into the question of whether this amendment is in order, and I would not desire to take any advantage of the point if Mr. Speaker should decide that the amendment was out of order. I feel, however, that we are not called upon at the present moment to make any extended remarks in regard to the very important question to which the hon. gentleman has referred, the principle reason being that this is by no means the time for a discussion in the line on which the hon. gentleman has addressed the House. We are at the beginning of the session. It is a well established principle under constitutional government for an address to be presented to His Excellency in reply to the speech from the Throne, and while hon. gentlemen who may be sitting to the Speaker's left have an undoubted right to move any amendment they please, it is a well established custom of parliament that you do not attempt to discuss public questions generally, with a view of calling for a vote upon them before the House is placed in possession of the information which might be necessary for a consideration of the whole matter. I think the hon. member for Hamilton (Mr. Barker) is open to the suspicion that he is very much afraid that when the papers in connection with the Quebec bridge are brought down, he will find no cause for complaint against the government; and therefore he hastens to find fault now, before the report of the commission of inquiry is brought down, and before the House has a single document before it.

The hon. gentleman found it extraordinary that when he put the question to my right hon. friend the Prime Minister—were these plans approved by the Governor in Council?—my right hon. friend said: Well, I cannot say offhand, but I presume the law was complied with. My hon. friend made merry over it. He said: The Prime Minister does not know and the ministers

Mr. SPEAKER.

around him do not know. The hon. gentleman might ask a question about five hundred orders in council which no minister could answer at the moment. If the hon. gentleman had been in earnest in his desire to obtain information of that nature, he would have put a notice on the paper and allowed of an opportunity to make an investigation. The hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) put a passing question to my right hon. friend—fair enough in its way—I do not complain of it—whether these plans had been approved of, and my right hon. friend gave an answer, but my hon. friend, the leader of the opposition, I presume, if he attached importance to it, would have given notice of his question. He asked the question, legitimately enough, and then passed on to other things, but the hon. member for East Hamilton (Mr. Barker) dwells upon it as evidence of gross neglect on the part of the Prime Minister that he could not answer a question offhand as to one of five hundred orders in council which may have been passed since the date of the contract referred to. What are the facts of the case? Years ago it was recognized that it was necessary to have a bridge across the St. Lawrence at Quebec. A company was incorporated for the construction of the bridge. My hon. friend treats that company as being from the beginning a company of straw; he has made merry at its expense, he has treated it as a bankrupt company and has said everything that is bad of it. That company is composed of some of the most respectable citizens of Quebec and I venture to say that my hon. friend would not go down to the city of Quebec and make the statements concerning the gentlemen composing that company which he has rashly made on the floor of this House to-day. The government of the province of Quebec—

Mr. BARKER. Will the hon. gentleman allow me to ask him a question?

Mr. FIELDING. Certainly, with pleasure.

Mr. BARKER. Is he arguing that these gentlemen in Quebec are responsible for that bridge?

Mr. FIELDING. I am arguing that they are responsible for everything concerning the company of which they are the directors, and when the hon. gentleman sneers and jeers at that company and treats them as a bankrupt and worthless company, I say he is attacking the standing, the reputation and the character of some of the most reputable men in the city of Quebec. If my memory serves me—and I think I will be excused if I do not go into the matter very fully—we have not the details, we have not the information at this moment when we are expected to discuss the question,—but speaking very hurriedly and without looking at