

Speaker who is the custodian of the rules of the house, and whose duty it is to see that they are observed. I do not wish the impression to go abroad that I am usurping the Speaker's authority.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I should not like that inference to be drawn, but the Prime Minister will agree that he does a great deal of guiding the Speaker in his judgments because when the Prime Minister—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Speaker, I regard that remark as a reflection on Your Honour, and it should be withdrawn at once. One of the first rules of the house is that no member has the right to reflect on His Honour the Speaker in the discharge of his duties.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Withdraw.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member will withdraw.

Mr. JOHNSTON: If the Prime Minister thinks I have imputed motives I certainly withdraw that remark. But I will say this, that there was a great deal more latitude given to the Prime Minister in his remarks when speaking on the point of order than was given to the other members.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Withdraw

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sure the hon. member does not wish to imply that partiality has been shown in the course of this debate, but that is the only inference that can be drawn from his remark. I must ask him to withdraw that statement.

Mr. JOHNSTON: If I have offended the Chair, I shall have to withdraw that too, but I think the record will bear out what I say.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw without reservation.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I will withdraw it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Speaker, not Mr. Chairman. The house is not in committee.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It seems to me that the government is exceedingly anxious lest this matter be brought before the public accounts committee, and it leads me to believe that there is something behind the accusations. If the public is thinking along the same lines that I am, knowing what I do about some government expenditures, the government would be well advised to have the public accounts committee investigate this charge.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The hon. member is saying either too much or too little. He had better inform the house and the country what the charge is that he is prepared to make.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I think I can answer immediately if the Prime Minister will give me permission to reveal some things that came to light in the war expenditures committee. That is why I asked for a secret session to discuss these things. I am not permitted to say what I have in my mind.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The Prime Minister does not give permission or withhold permission. This house has decided what is right and what is wrong in the matter of procedure, and it is by the rules of the house the hon. member is obliged to abide.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Prime Minister has withheld from this house the privilege of having a secret session in regard to these matters.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The Prime Minister has not. He had a conference with the leader of the hon. member's party and with the leader of the opposition, and the leader of the other group. We discussed the question of a secret session and we decided that a secret session would be held, but at a time that is likely to suit the convenience of all parties in this house.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am extremely pleased that the Prime Minister is to have a secret session, but I would suggest to him in all fairness that it be held in sufficient time to allow these matters to come before the public accounts committee. That is as far as I shall go at the present time.

Mr. H. C. GREEN (Vancouver South): This has been a rather hectic, windy afternoon. Perhaps that is because the day is Monday. I feel that there is some danger of the real point being overlooked in this debate. To my mind that point is this: Are the public accounts committee to be limited in their investigations to what took place before the 1st of April, 1942, or are they not? There has been much talk around the subject but that point has not been made clear.

The reference to the committee to-day is that they deal with the auditor general's report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1942, and with the public accounts up to that date. May I suggest to the Prime Minister that the settlement of this point, a decision as to what the public accounts committee are to consider, should be a matter of government policy? That question cannot be evaded by saying: Oh, it is up to some private member to bring