

Office Economies Control

began, and while perhaps the whole house must to some extent share responsibility for this situation, I believe the Prime Minister and all hon. members will agree that in view of the huge increases in governmental expenditures the country will expect the fullest possible scrutiny of these outlays, in the public interest. In my opinion the reference of the auditor general's report to the public accounts committee should be an annual automatic procedure in the same fashion that the annual report and accounts of the Canadian National Railways are referred each year to the railway committee.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): My impression had been that every year the auditor general's report has been referred to the public accounts committee. No motion in that regard has been made thus far, but I shall undertake to see that the report tabled this year is referred to the committee.

OFFICE ECONOMIES CONTROL

REFERENCE TO PRESS REPORT AS TO STATEMENTS
OF COLONEL JOHN THOMPSON

On the orders of the day:

Mr. GORDON GRAYDON (Leader of the Opposition): I should like to direct the attention of the Prime Minister to a press report appearing in last evening's *Ottawa Journal*, in which Colonel John Thompson, director of government office economy control, is reported to have said that he found it increasingly impossible to cope with all the crazy waste and extravagance, and that evasion, subterfuge and outright trickery are being used to nullify his work. When the public accounts committee is convened I would ask that Colonel Thompson be summoned as a witness.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): The words quoted by my hon. friend make it appear as though he were seeking to give information rather than obtain it. However I shall leave it to my colleague the Minister of National War Services to reply to his question.

Hon. L. R. LaFLECHE (Minister of National War Services): I may tell my hon. friend that I did not hear of the subject matter of the newspaper article in question until late yesterday afternoon, when I immediately instituted inquiries. When I did so I had in mind that it would not be fair to take for granted everything stated in the article. The director of economies has already informed me that he does not give statements to the press. I also had in mind

[Mr. Graydon.]

that members of the public service of Canada generally would feel that they had been condemned publicly without being given the opportunity to state their side of the case to the responsible officials, or to the ministers of the several departments of government in question.

I also had in mind that the best, if not indeed the only method of effecting economies is to explain new and cheaper methods of administration and to try for cooperation which, in my opinion, is always forthcoming when a reasonable and timely appeal is made to our loyal and patriotic service, known as the civil service body.

It also came to my mind that the government itself, in desiring to practise economy, had been responsible for setting up the directorate in question. I also remembered having offered to give my support to the director to the end of helping him to make a success of what is indeed a very difficult task, due to the very great variety of questions and problems which must be, and are, brought to his attention. It was also borne in upon me that should there be any evasion, subterfuge or trickery the Minister of National War Services should be the first person to hear of it. I also realized that the heavy work of the war-time departments cannot be done without the necessary tools. Modern administrative practice demands certain information, office appliances, equipment, plans, and means of communicating rapidly sometimes, and sometimes to large numbers of persons concerned.

I think the proper objective is to help in such way that the work can be done well, smoothly and at a minimum of cost. I believe I may add that it is well known to the director of economies that if he needs additional staff he has but to ask for it, when I will immediately take up the need with the civil service commission.

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. G. DIFENBAKER (Lake Centre): I should like to ask a question of the Minister of National War Services in connection with the statement made by Colonel Thompson, the government economies director. I read this for the purpose of asking the minister whether the rather astounding allegation made is in accordance with the facts.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The minister has dealt with that already.

Mr. DIFENBAKER: It has not been dealt with and that is the reason I am bring-