

*Old Age Security***OLD AGE SECURITY**

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Drew: Unless the Prime Minister's remarks were directed to that motion, they had no place at this time. After all, the Prime Minister has seen fit to express an opinion in regard to that report; doubtless that is his opinion. I have no doubt that the laughter of the Liberal members was laughter at the fact that anybody should doubt that such a meeting took place. I believe this discussion should proceed now, on the basis of the remarks that have been made by the Prime Minister.

Mr. St. Laurent: My remarks were made because the hon. member for Peterborough West (Mr. Fraser) referred to the fact that the orders of the day were not being called; therefore the member for Winnipeg North Centre would not have an opportunity of receiving an answer to a question which he considered to be of importance. It was for that reason I volunteered the answer.

Mr. Coldwell: I think the point made by the leader of the opposition should be considered by Your Honour and by the house. According to the press dispatch, this matter involves not only some government supporters in the Liberal party, but also a civil servant, one who occupies an important position which enables him to place contracts. Since the question has been reopened by the Prime Minister—I think it should have been dealt with when the member for Peterborough West (Mr. Fraser) asked the question he did—the house should have an opportunity of discussing it today.

Mr Speaker: When I made my ruling, no appeal was taken from it. May I point out to the leader of the opposition something which I am sure he realizes, namely, that he will have an opportunity of discussing this matter, because he has not spoken on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne.

Mr. Drew: I do not rise for the purpose of questioning the ruling or reopening the debate. I would point out, however, the validity of the contention put forward by the mover of the motion. If there is any basis for the report it should be discussed before we deal with the estimates of the Department of National Defence. If it is true, it is a most serious situation which should be known to the members when the estimates of the Department of National Defence are being considered.

APPOINTMENT OF JOINT COMMITTEE TO STUDY LEGISLATION, ALTERNATIVE METHODS, ETC.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of National Health and Welfare) moved:

That a joint committee of both houses of parliament be appointed to examine and study the operation and effects of existing legislation of the parliament of Canada and of the several provincial legislatures with respect to old age security; similar legislation in other countries; possible alternative measures of old age security for Canada, with or without a means test for beneficiaries, including plans based on contributory insurance principles; the probable cost thereof and possible methods of providing therefor; the constitutional and financial adjustments, if any, required for the effective operations of such plans and other related matters;

That twenty-eight members of the House of Commons, to be designated by the house at a later date, be members of the joint committee on the part of this house, and that standing order 65 of the House of Commons be suspended in relation thereto.

That the committee have power to appoint, from among its members, such subcommittees as may be deemed advisable or necessary; to call for persons, papers and records; to sit while the house is sitting, and to report from time to time.

That the committee have power to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee for the use of the committee and of parliament, and that standing order 64 of the House of Commons be suspended in relation thereto.

And that a message be sent to the Senate requesting that house to unite with this house for the above purpose and to select, if the Senate deems advisable, some of its members to act on the proposed joint committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in moving the adoption of this resolution, I should like to set out certain basic facts and considerations which may be of interest to the proposed committee and may receive further study at its hands.

At the outset let me say that, as the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) stated in the house on February 20, the government attaches the greatest importance to improving old age security in Canada.

Regardless of any improvements that may be made in our present pensions system, or any new system that may be suggested or instituted, all of us in this house, regardless of party, can agree on one common objective. This is to develop the best possible old age and retirement system that can be devised, with full consideration for the well-being of all Canadians. This proposed joint committee can do a real public service by its investigations in clearing the way for a better system of pensions, if that is thought desirable after analysis, for our senior aged citizens.

The idea of a parliamentary committee on old age pensions, sir, is not new to this house. Committees were set up in 1908 and in 1924; and in both instances were followed by beneficial results. The committee of 1908 was