

time some very strong opinions had been voiced in regard to the running of the restaurant. It was thought that the Canadian National Railways and the management of the Chateau Laurier could give better satisfaction, particularly by providing better food, and that in the end the Government might save some money. After the experience of one short session we now have placed before us a resolution asking us to revert to the old system. We may be justified in taking such action, but I think we should be informed how the restaurant came out financially last year, whether or not the Canadian National Railways want to give up the contract, and what is behind this motion. We cannot reasonably be asked to jump from one system to the other before hearing some expression of opinion from the members of both Houses. I think that many honourable members would prefer the old system; but if the opinion of Mr. Ryckman had been borne out, the grant of \$15,000 to the Railway, with free light, free rent, free linen and so forth, should have effected a saving to the country and permitted the Canadian National Railways to make some money out of the restaurant. In any event, I think the House and the country are entitled to some information.

Hon. Mr. GORDON: I should like to know why this drastic step is being taken, and whether it is with the consent or at the request of the Canadian National Railways. To speak plainly, I have always regarded the restaurant as a kind of graft. I do not think this country is under any obligation to incur a loss of \$30,000 or \$40,000 a year in feeding the members of this House and the House of Commons. I think that is what it has been doing for many years.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: Oh, no.

Hon. Mr. GORDON: I think I am right.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: Absolutely not.

Hon. Mr. MacARTHUR: Correct.

Hon. Mr. GORDON: I believe that is the fact.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: I have been on the committee and have seen the figures, and I know that the amount is not half that mentioned by the honourable gentleman.

Hon. Mr. MacARTHUR: I remember distinctly that in some years the cost exceeded \$20,000.

Hon. Mr. GORDON: It was higher than that at times. I was under the impression

that it was a good stroke of business to give the management of the restaurant to the Canadian National Railways; first, because I thought the restaurant would be run in the businesslike manner in which that company deals with every problem, and secondly, because we should know just what the cost was going to be. I should be sorry to see that arrangement discontinued without the company having had a full opportunity to show what it could do. As I have said before, I think it is the meanest kind of graft for members of Parliament to accept services that are provided at a loss to the country.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: I do not know where my honourable friend gets his information. I can assure the House that he is quite in error in the figures he has mentioned. No authority has been given for a Committee on the Restaurant to take official action in this matter, but several of us who were members of the committee in past years were sufficiently interested to endeavour to secure the opinions of members of the Senate and members of the other House. It was impossible to see everybody, but so far as we could ascertain it was the consensus of opinion that the service last year was not satisfactory—

Some Hon. SENATORS: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: —and that in the end it did not result in any saving of money.

There has been a general impression that the restaurant was conducted as a club for the members. If it ever was such a club, it was divested last year of that character and became nothing but an ordinary eating-house. Members were treated in just the same way that they would have been if they had gone to a public place of refreshment. To a great many members that was not pleasing. I do not know about my honourable friend, but it has been my custom during the greater part of the sessions to take my meals in the restaurant, and therefore I know something about it.

After consulting with Their Honours the Speakers of both Houses, and with many members, the unofficial committee who were asked to discuss the matter were unanimously of the opinion that we should revert to the old order of things. At the same time it was stated by persons who, I believe, have knowledge of the subject that steps could be taken to reduce the overhead cost of the restaurant.

Some Hon. SENATORS: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. TANNER: It is well known that the principal difficulty is due to the fact that