

Mr. C. E. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words on this motion before it carries. While the amendment proposed may not have been in order, I think it was a very fair request to make of the government. If the government desired, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has intimated, that these matters should be brought before the committee I do not think there would have been any objection had the amendment carried. The Prime Minister went to great length to assert that his desire was to have all these matters brought before the public accounts committee. I am glad he did that because a charge of the nature of the one which has been made is sufficiently serious to warrant a thorough investigation into it.

I have in mind asking the Prime Minister to hold a secret session of this house in order that we may discuss some of the matters investigated by the war expenditures committee. It was not my intention to cause any scandal, and therefore I ask the government to hold a secret session in order that hon. members may become conversant with some of the matters dealt with by the war expenditures committee. I felt sure and I feel yet that if the members of this house knew the way in which large sums of money have been spent they would want an investigation by the public accounts committee.

The Prime Minister may say that if I have a charge to make, I can make it before the public accounts committee, but I should like to draw to his attention the fact that I cannot do that because the information I have was obtained during sittings of the war expenditures committee which were in camera. I cannot go to the public accounts committee and say to them, Here is my reason why I think you should investigate this case because it was all held in secret sittings. I shall draw only one or two instances to the attention of the Prime Minister. These were recorded in the report tabled in this house by the war expenditures committee, subcommittee No. 1. The first was in connection with a contract in which reference was made to sales commission. I think the words of the report were that something like fifty per cent of the capitalization of the company was given to a salesman as sales commission. That reveals only part of the story because the capitalization of the company runs into thousands and thousands of dollars. Take half of that and you still have a quarter of a million dollars. That is a great deal of money. I think these matters should be brought before the public accounts committee, and if this money has been

[Mr. MacInnis.]

wrongly got it should be returned to the government. But how can I go to the public accounts committee and state my reasons why I think the committee should deal with these matters? It is most important that they should be dealt with.

I am not conversant with the charges made in the house by the hon. member for Weyburn (Mr. Douglas), but I say that if there is any room for suspicion the public accounts committee is the place where it should be aired. I have in mind a reference to insurance that was made in subcommittee No. 1. There, again, may I suggest to the Prime Minister, is a good case to bring before the public accounts committee. It runs into thousands and thousands of dollars. But again I cannot even express the reasons why I think this should be done because the meetings of the committee were held in camera.

The Prime Minister has spoken of the great need of holding these meetings in secret. In part I agree with him because some things that were discussed by the war expenditures committee could not very well be made public. I have reference only to those things which indicated our production or related directly to the designs of our aircraft, ships and guns. As far as the financial transactions are concerned I cannot see why they should not be made public. Therefore I would say that there are times when meetings should be held in camera and definitely there are other times when the meetings should be public. Usually a more thorough investigation will be obtained if the meeting is held in public.

There has been some discussion as to the vote that was taken in the subcommittee for secret meetings. With all due deference to the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Cleaver), as I recall it there was a vote taken as to whether that subcommittee should hold secret or public meetings. I do not recall that the motion was withdrawn, and I cannot see how he could argue that, because the committee could not have sat in secret if there had not been a vote to that effect. I have not looked up my notes, but my memory is that a vote was taken on that question.

The Prime Minister should get over this technicality of ruling these motions out of order. If the Prime Minister really desires an investigation into these matters, I am sure he will make it feasible for that to be done. There is a suspicion in the public mind that large expenditures of public money have been made unnecessarily.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend has stated that I have ruled these motions out of order. I am not the Speaker. It is the