

*Committee on Defence Expenditure*

to ask any questions. I should like to say a word or two about the late Mr. Mackenzie King, and I do not intend to say anything derogatory about that right hon. gentleman.

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** Is this in order on a motion to set up a committee?

**Mr. Knight:** I shall say nothing against the late prime minister. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. If you can imagine that he succeeded as he himself was sure he would succeed, in being able to communicate as it were between two worlds, I can see him shaking his head in sorrow and shame at the actions—

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** On a point of order. This house is discussing a motion to set up a committee to examine national defence expenditures and I submit the hon. gentleman is out of order.

**Mr. Knight:** On a point of order.—

**An hon. Member:** Horses.

**Mr. Fournier (Hull):** I have no objection to horses.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** If the hon. member for Saskatoon (Mr. Knight) wishes to speak about certain decisions made or positions taken by the former prime minister, it is probably in order. I do not think he wants to do anything else.

**Mr. Knight:** What I propose to do, and it is relevant to the question, is to show what the former Prime Minister would have done in this particular instance which, may I say, he would not have allowed to occur or at least to reach the stage it has. I can see him in my imagination out behind the curtains, shaking his head at the political ineptitude of his successor and his cabinet.

**Some hon. Members:** Temper, temper.

**Mr. Knight:** What would he have done? Although I have never yet been at a cabinet meeting—

**Mr. Dewar:** You never will be there, but you can dream.

**Mr. Knight:** I can see him at the head of the table with that stubby little pencil writing the first draft of the resignation of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) as soon as these things came out, as soon as there were reports of inefficiency and maladministration in this Department of National Defence. That resignation would have been written out and my hon. friend the Minister of National Defence would have been asked to sign it. Then the late prime minister would have gone out and chopped off the two top heads of the army administration. Then he would have come into this house and made the speech of his life.

[Mr. Knight.]

**Mr. Dewar:** That is the first thing they do in Russia.

**Mr. Knight:** He would have said that he had personally saved this country from military rule. He would have said that no military authority must be allowed ever to have influence on the civil rule of this country. He would say that he had saved this country, and then he would have done what this government has not the courage to do. He would have dissolved this house and gone to the country and won an election, something that this government knows it cannot and will not do.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Knight:** I shall simply close my remarks by saying that the Currie report is a terrible indictment of this government; and that no whitewashing in the committee or anywhere else will cover up the dark shadows. The committee which the government propose to set up is not to investigate the crime but to investigate the investigator. Let the government go to the country now, and the public will decide.

**Mr. Gardiner:** I said that I still wanted to ask a question when my hon. friend finished. Have I his permission to ask it now?

**Mr. Knight:** Certainly.

**Mr. Gardiner:** Mr. Speaker, for my own benefit, and I think the benefit of some others, I would like to be clear on one point.

**Mr. Knight:** Is it a question or a speech?

**Mr. Gardiner:** It is a question—perhaps two but one anyway. Are we assured that the leader of the C.C.F. party would have followed exactly the same procedure which was followed by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in connection with this matter? The whole argument is based on the idea that the leader of a party is of a particularly high type politically. Does the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan (Mr. Coldwell) take responsibility for all that is being said with regard to this matter? He has not been in the house at all since it came up.

**Mr. Knight:** Mr. Speaker, as I say I do not know too much about the details of the incident.

**Mr. Dickey:** You have proved that, but answer the question.

**Mr. Knight:** That is what I propose to do. The right hon. minister has asked me, as I understand it, if the member for Winnipeg North Centre has followed the same course that the member for Rosetown-Biggan would have done had he not actually been ill, but had been in the house. Is that right?