

Mr. ROSS (Moose Jaw): Something that happened six days ago. Surely he does not mean that seriously?

Mr. COLDWELL: He certainly does.

Mr. ROSS (Moose Jaw): It would be utterly foolish to pass a motion in this house that we should bring down the public accounts of this country up to February 28, just a week ago.

Mr. P. C. BLACK (Cumberland): This committee is being set up and specific duties are being assigned to it. Certain matters are being referred to the committee and I think they should be cleared up. The hon. member for Halton (Mr. Cleaver) made reference to some of the decisions arrived at in one of the subcommittees of the war expenditures committee. I was a member of that committee and I want to say that he extended to me every courtesy, but I must take exception to what he has said in this house.

I took the stand in the committee that information with regard to the expenditure of public moneys should be disclosed to the public and that I, as a member, was not entitled to information not available to the public unless it was information which, if disclosed, might give comfort to the enemy or be detrimental to our war interests. That is the stand I took. Several important subjects were referred to subcommittee No. 1 of the war expenditures committee. Among these matters was war-time housing, involving at that time, I believe, an expenditure of \$67,000,000. There was also the aeroplane industry, which involved the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars and in connection with which there had to be considerable secrecy. There was also war-time shipping, which involved many millions of dollars.

The first subject which was set up for investigation was war-time housing. I could not conceive that there was anything having to do with war-time housing that could give comfort to the enemy or that would be contrary to our military efforts. I made a motion, I think at the first session, that all evidence and information given before the committee having to do with war-time housing should be made available to the public. That was supported by the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Boucher) and the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Johnston), but it was voted down at the instance of the chairman, the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Cleaver), and the other members of the committee.

My colleagues and I then had to decide whether we should continue to act when our wishes were not complied with or whether

[Mr. T. C. Douglas.]

we should retire from the committee. An important responsibility had been assigned to us and we felt that it was our duty to discharge that even under those limitations. We therefore decided to stay. I went on record then, and I go on record now, as not believing that the expenditures having to do with war-time housing should have been withheld from the public. I did not believe there was any necessity to sit in camera, but I complied with the request of the majority of the committee that the evidence be taken in camera, in secret. A copy of the evidence was not made available to me, although it is true it was in the hands of the chairman of the committee and I could go to his office and look it over. But I was handicapped and curtailed to that extent. Therefore I have to take objection to the statement made by the hon. member for Halton that we were not voted down but that we were allowed to make our investigations and give the information to the public. In making the motion that the evidence be made available to the public, I also made this condition, that even in the investigations with regard to war-time housing, matters should not be disclosed to the public which would give comfort to the enemy, and I was quite willing that such evidence should be taken in camera.

Mr. ANGUS MacINNIS (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, we seem to have gone off at a tangent in the debate on this motion. As I understand the motion made by the Prime Minister, it is to refer the auditor general's report for the fiscal year ended March, 1942, to the public accounts committee.

Mr. ILSLEY: And the public accounts.

Mr. MacINNIS: And the public accounts, yes. Some of us on this side of the house would like to have the term of reference extended, and if my opinion is of any value to the government I suggest that they are really standing in their own light if at this time they oppose that extension. As has already been pointed out, the people are being asked to make substantial sacrifices, and they are prepared to make them because they believe that they are being asked to make them for a cause that is worth while. But the people are suspicious that there is a great deal of waste and extravagance, and if at this time they find that the government is opposed to investigating charges that have been made, not by a member of this house, not by the newspapers, but by a responsible official, then I am afraid that the repercussions will not be good.

There is no use in saying that charges have not been made. Charges certainly have been