

Financial Administration

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): That last remark is probably justified and I was not suggesting that that be done here and now. What I had hoped for was some indication that the matter would be pursued. Is the reference of the report of the Canadian National Railways to the committee each year something which must be originated each year or is there some standing arrangement whereby that is done?

Mr. Sinclair: It is my recollection that when the Minister of Transport tables the annual reports of the C.N.R. and T.C.A. he then moves that those reports be referred to the special committee on railways and shipping owned and operated by the government.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): I think that is the complete answer. That is exactly what I was hoping the parliamentary assistant was going to say. Why should that not be done with regard to other reports? Why should they not be referred to the appropriate committee in each case, and if there is no appropriate committee why not adopt the suggestion of the hon. member for Melfort and set up a kind of catch-all committee? As to that last suggestion, perhaps the parliamentary assistant will say that the public accounts committee is the catch-all committee. I am not so sure that is right. I would think that some of these reports might much more reasonably be referred to other committees. Some of them deal particularly with agriculture and they might be referred to the standing committee on agriculture. I understand the hon. member for Melfort would be satisfied if the same procedure were adopted with regard to such reports as that which is adopted with respect to the Canadian National Railways.

Mr. Howe: I might point out with respect to the complaint of the hon. member for Melfort that he asked that the standing committee on agriculture be called together to amend the Canada Grain Act, which is something quite different. It was not called for that purpose, and he said that if it had been he had intended to ask the committee to call before it the officers of the Canadian wheat board. I suggest that is pretty remote as far as censuring the government is concerned.

Mr. Wright: I must say that at some stage in every session I have asked in speeches I have made that the annual accounts of the Canadian wheat board be referred to the committee on agriculture. I do not think there has been a session in which I have not made that request. I would be very well satisfied if the minister would accept the suggestion and carry out the procedure followed by the government with respect to Canadian National

[Mr. Sinclair.]

Railways. When these annual statements of crown corporations are tabled in the house the minister tabling them could refer them to the appropriate committee. I do not think the public accounts committee is the appropriate committee to which all these annual statements should be referred. For instance the report of the agricultural prices support board would naturally go to the committee on agriculture. Then there is the fisheries support board, and I think its report should go to a different committee. Each crown corporation falls naturally within the scope of some standing committee of the house. I do not think they should all be referred to the public accounts committee.

If the public accounts committee carries out its job of examining the public accounts each year it has a pretty full schedule before it. It could handle some of the annual statements but certainly I do not think it should handle them all. I do not think they would fall naturally within their purview. Committees of the house are usually set up having in mind the interest of members in the particular subject with which the committee deals. I think these annual statements when tabled by the ministers should be referred to the appropriate committee. I think the government is quite capable of deciding what is the appropriate committee. I think the same procedure should be followed as in the case of Canadian National Railways. When a report is tabled it should be referred by the minister concerned to some standing committee of the house.

Mr. Howe: There is a procedure which my hon. friend could always have followed in order to bring any report before any committee he liked provided he was a member of the committee. That procedure was not to make a speech in the House of Commons. The procedure is to call the committee together, make his request to the committee and have the committee request that the matter be referred to it. That procedure was always open to him, and to my knowledge he has never followed it.

Mr. Wright: I beg your pardon. Last year as a member of the standing committee on agriculture I wrote a letter to the chairman, a copy of which I sent to the appropriate committee clerk, asking that the committee be called together for a specific purpose, and my request was refused.

Section agreed to.

On section 77—*Auditor General eligible.*

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): There is one point I wish to raise.

The Chairman: On 77?