

*Research Council*

moneys in the consolidated revenue fund. They are tabled in the reports, having already been allocated by the Government Companies Operation Act. Expenditure can come before parliament for scrutiny and discussion in only one of two ways: an estimate, which is a proposed expenditure, or a statutory appropriation under a statutory appropriation act, as I think the Government Companies Operation Act is. What opportunity will parliament have to discuss expenditures, increased earnings from the operation of these crown companies, together with grants for operations, extensions, maintenance or improvements? If the minister would enlighten us on that point it might allay our fears.

Mr. HOWE: My hon. friend has asked that question five or six times, and I have tried to explain the situation in the simplest language I could use, but I have been totally unable to make him understand. I am not going to start all over again. Reiteration can be carried too far, and I am not going to reiterate again.

Section agreed to.

On section 2—Committee of the P.C. on scientific and industrial research.

Mr. GREEN: This section deals with the committee of the privy council on scientific and industrial research. Apparently in past years that committee has not functioned to any great extent. I think that is a tragedy. There is some scope for such a committee if it is possible to get busy cabinet ministers to devote enough time to meetings of the committee. Is there to be any change in the situation in the future? Is it now intended that there shall be an active and aggressive committee of the cabinet dealing with matters of research, or is this committee of the cabinet to continue to be largely a matter of form?

Mr. HOWE: There is and always has been an active committee. It meets to decide any question of policy referred to it. It is composed of the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, the Minister of Mines and Resources, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Labour.

Mr. NICHOLSON: How often did the committee meet last year?

Mr. HOWE: I have attended five or six meetings, and I did not always go until I became chairman. I spent at least an hour a day on affairs of the national research council acting in my capacity as chairman of that

[Mr. Boucher.]

committee. The committee met three or four times in the last year, not on routine matters, but to decide matters of policy, to discuss the size of the appropriation and the nature of the projects that should be undertaken.

Mr. GREEN: Does it deal with any business other than the conduct of the research council?

Mr. HOWE: That is all.

Section agreed to.

On section 3—Appointment of council.

Mr. JACKMAN: Subsection 4 provides:

There shall be an executive committee of the council consisting of the president, vice-president (administration), vice-president (scientific) and at least three other members selected by the council.

I suggest to the minister—and I do not see why he would not accept it if he has the best interest of the committee at heart—that the last line but one of that subsection be amended to read: “and at least four other members selected by the council.” The reason I suggest that is that only the executive members are in receipt of remuneration; the others serve voluntarily. It is not easy to get men to attend. If only three other members are appointed it would mean that the executive officers would be in the majority at all times. If at least four outside members were appointed to this executive committee, or even five or six, there would be a better chance of the committee not being dominated by or of even having a majority of executive officers at all times. I think that is a reasonable suggestion which I hope the minister will accept.

Mr. HOWE: I would not argue at length whether the executive committee should be six or seven. The council itself in the past has consisted of fifteen, distributed geographically from coast to coast. It is now proposed to make the council twenty. Because of geographic and travel difficulties, it meets four times a year. Between meetings of the council the responsibility for decision has been carried in the past by the president of the council. The creation of an executive committee which can meet frequently will relieve the president and paid officers of some responsibility for decisions between meetings of the full council. I question whether an executive committee of seven would be better than one of six members. I think usually an executive committee consists of five. The smaller it is, the better the responsibility is carried.