

wish to have it spent in a particular way. The whole effort of the past has been to place the responsibility for expenditures of public moneys on the shoulders of the government, and to hold the government responsible to parliament and the people for expenditures. Some of these amendments have involved a departure from what is a very sound principle of government.

Another criticism that has been made is that the powers of the committee are restricted. I have already covered that in part, in what I have said about the scope of the committee. Someone said that, unless there was power given the committee to make recommendations, there was no power in the committee at all. Here is what the motion says:

That the committee shall have power to appoint from among its members such subcommittees as may be deemed advisable or necessary to deal with specific phases of the enquiry, and power to send for persons, papers and records, to examine witnesses under oath and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee.

There is another paragraph to which I would particularly direct the attention of hon. members who say that the powers of the committee are restricted. This reads:

That the committee shall have power to engage the services of counsel, accountants and other necessary assistants who shall be paid out of the appropriation for parliament.

What greater powers could be given to a committee than that? There are all the powers of a royal commission, the power to summon persons from one end of the country to the other, to engage experts to make inquiry into any phase of this question, to have highly trained accountants serve the committee in its efforts to find out what is the cause for the rise in prices. I can understand persons who, in times like the present, may have been hoarding, or who may be seeking to profit, complaining about an investigation into the questions of hoarding and profiteering; I can understand them not liking the idea of a committee that will have all the powers necessary to discover these things; from that source I can understand opposition to a committee of this kind. However, I find it difficult to discover any ground of complaint, from the point of view of the public interest, against a committee which will seek to serve the public by discovering as soon as possible what the causes are that account for the recent rise in the cost of living in our country.

One other matter. We have been told over and over again that it is action that hon. gentlemen want, not a committee. To some extent their behaviour during this last week has borne that out. They certainly have not

made it easy to get a committee functioning. We have been a whole week in just trying to get a yes or no answer as to whether a committee should be appointed. What action have we had? We have had something in the nature of action from hon. gentlemen opposite, but all along it has been what might be termed "a delaying action".

When I spoke a week ago Monday I told the house that we would set apart the following week for the discussion of this measure, that we would give precedence to it over any other measure, that the government was anxious to have this committee appointed as soon as possible. What happened the week before? I had to ask hon. gentlemen opposite please to come along with the names for the committee that I had requested in a previous week. I should have said that, as soon as the house reassembled in the New Year, I gave my hon. friend, the leader of the opposition, the assurance that we would appoint this committee within a week. I said, first of all, "possibly in two weeks." I knew from the past that hon. gentlemen opposite have been accustomed to delaying a little the sending in of the names for committees, and that has proved to be true again in this case. The leader of the opposition said, "No, we must have this in a week." I said, "All right, let us have it in a week, but before it can be set up within the week we have to have the names for the committee." I had to ask hon. gentlemen please to hurry along with the names so that we could go along on Monday with setting up the committee.

What happened on Monday when the motion was introduced to set up the committee? I proposed to give the motion precedence all through the week, but hon. gentlemen took exception to my effort in that regard. They raised objection to the discussion on the appointment of a committee from being gone on with on the following day. Well, we did manage to keep the debate going for four days in the past week, through yesterday and up to the present time. This whole matter might have been settled on Monday afternoon, over a week ago, but here we are on Tuesday of the following week still seeking a simple yes or no answer to the question of appointing a committee to investigate the rise in prices.

I say again that the action of hon. gentlemen opposite has been definitely a delaying action. The responsibility has not been that of the government; the responsibility is that of those who, up to the present time, have made it difficult to get this committee appointed. As I have already said, if hon.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]