

addressed to me by Colonel John Thompson, director of government office economies control, which I should like to read:

Apropos of an item I saw in the press, either last night or the night before, I wish to say that at no time has there been any interference by the government, or yourself, or any member of parliament, with this office in the performance of the duties allotted to it by order in council.

The word "no" in the memorandum is underlined, and the letter is signed by John Thompson, whose full title is Colonel John Thompson, director of government office economies control.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Is that all that there is in the memorandum, may I ask?

Mr. LaFLECHE: Yes, and may I repeat what I said a moment ago, that I have brought to the house all that I have from Colonel Thompson as yet.

Mr. GRAYDON: If I may ask the minister a question, is that the only memorandum that has come to him from Colonel Thompson?

Mr. LaFLECHE: Yes, that is the only memorandum that I can find touching upon the question under discussion in this house.

Mr. GRAYDON: Had the minister seen the item in the *Ottawa Journal* and brought it to the attention of Colonel Thompson prior to his sending that memorandum?

Mr. LaFLECHE: On Friday last I made it very clear that as soon as I saw that article I instituted inquiries, and of course I wrote to the director.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Has the minister seen the list of specific charges in Saturday's *Toronto Telegram* and to-day's *Ottawa Journal*?

Mr. LaFLECHE: May I say that with the best of will or the worst I cannot take it for granted that these charges have been made by Colonel Thompson. I know him as an honourable gentleman, and I would remind the house of what I said in that connection last Friday, that particularly in the case of such a very old servant of the country as Colonel Thompson is—for years he was head of the pension commission—I would expect that had he any complaints to make he would make them to his minister direct. In their absence I am not in a position to add one word to what I have already said. I have already given to the house all the information that I have.

[Mr. LaFleche.]

Mr. GRAYDON: May I ask the minister one other question? Has Colonel Thompson denied to the minister the charges that were made in the *Ottawa Journal*?

Mr. LaFLECHE: I can only repeat—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. I would point out that there is a motion and an amendment before the chair. We are not in committee and questioning cannot be permitted.

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggar): Personally I think the only manner in which this matter can be cleared up is to have the committee sit and have Colonel Thompson appear before it to substantiate or deny that he ever gave such an interview. The statements that appeared in the press quoted Colonel Thompson, and my experience with the newspaper reporters, particularly those in the gallery of this house, is that when they quote someone they endeavour to quote accurately. I have not known them to do otherwise deliberately. I suggest that the men in our gallery at Ottawa are reliable when they give statements within quotation marks. Moreover, I cannot quite understand the situation, because Colonel Thompson said in his quoted statement that he had made repeated representations to the minister, and the minister has just said, as I understand it, that he has no representations of this sort on file from Colonel Thompson.

I think that the amendment should carry and that the matter should be dealt with under the procedure laid down by parliament. The committee has the power to call witnesses and question them under oath and to go to the bottom of the whole matter in a proper manner. I believe we would be derelict in our duty if we did not follow that procedure, because the charges which are said to have been made are of a serious nature, and ought to be gone into very carefully indeed by a committee of this house. The proper committee is the public accounts committee.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): May I say first of all that my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Graydon) asked me last week if I would see that the auditor general's report was referred to the public accounts committee and I said that I would. I have gone him one better by moving that the public accounts be referred as well. I made a mistake in replying to my hon. friend when I said that I thought the auditor general's report had in previous years been referred automatically to the public accounts committee. I agree with the leader of the opposition that it would be desirable that the auditor general's report and the public