

Mr. Bain. There is quite a difference between that and what the hon. gentleman (Mr. Ingram) has said.

Mr. INGRAM. I am surprised that it is found necessary for the hon. member for South Brant (Mr. Heyd) to speak, when the Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson) sits at his desk mate at this moment. Has it come to this, that the Minister of Customs is not able to defend himself in this House? Is it necessary to bring in a man from the county of Brant who says that Mr. Bain told him so and so, and as a consequence Mr. Bain is not guilty? Imagine it being said in a court of law that the prisoner had said that he was not guilty and that this must be taken as conclusive evidence. If my hon. friend from South Brant has no more idea of defending Mr. Bain than by making a statement of that kind, he knows very little about taking evidence in a court of law. Now I wish to quote from page 27 of this pamphlet, pointer No. 3:

The Public Accounts Committee is a medium for investigating, but as the Liberal Finance Minister showed in a speech delivered towards the close of last session the meetings of that committee during the session resolved themselves into a farce.

And let me say right here that no person contributed more to make them a farce than the Minister of Finance did.

The Conservative members of it could not be got to attend with any degree of regularity and they accomplished absolutely nothing. They, however, recognized the fairness and impartiality shown by the Liberal chairman of the committee, and passed him a vote of acknowledgment together with their thanks.

Now I would like to point out to the Minister of Finance that if this gentleman is guilty towards contributing to the preparation of this pamphlet that is circulated through this country, then he is contributing his quota as a civil servant to this charge against the Public Accounts Committee. I want to go further and state that the usual custom in the Public Accounts Committee is for ministers of the Crown to attend that committee, and whenever a witness is called to give evidence, which they fear, they are the first to say to the witness: It is not necessary for you to answer that question. I say the Minister of Finance has been guilty time and time again of requesting witnesses not to answer questions put to them by members of that committee. During the present session we have repeatedly seen questions put by the leader of the opposition to the leader of the government asking when the Public Accounts Committee was going to meet, and although parliament has now been in session from the 12th of March to the 24th of April, not one meeting of that committee has yet been held.

Mr. WADE. Would the hon. gentleman allow me a word? I am chairman of the

Public Accounts Committee. I have been prepared to call the committee at any time since its first meeting for organization, but to-day for the first time, some hon. gentlemen opposite intimated to me their desire that the committee should be called, and it will be called on Thursday.

Mr. INGRAM. Then the hon. gentleman was not in the House when he heard the leader of the opposition put these questions to the Prime Minister. Now, Sir, what makes the Public Accounts Committee a farce in the House, is the fact that whenever a witness is called for the purpose of giving testimony, and whenever it is thought by the government that his testimony is liable to involve some department of the government to their detriment, then ministers are there telling him that he may not answer, and defending him in his refusal. I want to tell the Minister of Finance and others who attend that committee, that the people of this country do not expect that their expenditures are to be controlled in that way. The people want to get at the honest facts in connection with the public accounts, and they expect that when witnesses are called to give their evidence, they will be allowed to do so whether the result may be detrimental to the government or not. That is the proper method of conducting the Committee of Public Accounts, and if that method is pursued we will not see any more campaign literature going forth declaring that the meetings of the Public Accounts Committee of this House are a farce.

Mr. ALEX. JOHNSTON. I do not rise for the purpose of prolonging this discussion, but merely to say a word or two on behalf of a worthy civil servant who is not here, and in a position to answer for himself the various charges made against him. It has been repeatedly charged by hon. gentlemen opposite that the campaign documents exhibited here to-day were prepared by Mr. John Bain, Assistant Commissioner of Customs. Now I am here to state in a most positive manner that such is not a fact. I happen to know something about the preparation of these documents. It happens that I, along with some other gentlemen were a committee to prepare some campaign literature. I know the origin of these documents, and I say in the most positive manner, that Mr. Bain is not the author of the documents. I repeat what was said in the earlier part of the discussion by the Minister of Customs, that the committee who were engaged in publishing these documents availed themselves of the figures prepared in the Customs Department for the use of the Minister of Customs in this House, and outside of it. We availed ourselves of these figures, they are to be found in these pamphlets that are being placed on exhibition. The comments that are made on these pamphlets do not affect Mr. Bain,