

Mr. ILSLEY: The comptroller of the treasury is responsible to the Minister of Finance. He is an officer of the Department of Finance and he does not report to the auditor general. The auditor general exercises an independent position by virtue of the fact that he is an officer of parliament, and he reviews such practices and operations of the comptroller of the treasury as he wishes to do.

Mr. PROBE: In the auditor general's report, at the end of the public accounts for the year 1945, I see quite a number of items that are queried. Does the comptroller of the treasury take steps to recover improper payments or anything of the sort when they are drawn to his attention?

Mr. ILSLEY: I do not know what my hon. friend means by improper payments. If payments are legally recoverable, of course we would. I do not know whether it is the comptroller of the treasury or myself, but somebody goes right after them at once. I think the criticisms of the auditor general are criticisms, not of illegal expenditures—I do not think there are any illegal expenditures—but rather of the advisability of expenditures.

Mr. PROBE: It might have been better to say inadvisable or unauthorized expenditures.

Mr. ILSLEY: What the auditor general states in his report is naturally of much concern to the government. We do not want to be criticized by the auditor general more than we can help, but sometimes the opinion of the auditor general differs from that of the government as to what is advisable.

Mr. PROBE: Does the minister as Minister of Finance, when a financial matter is called to his attention, follow it through and get the action that is suggested? I wish to call attention particularly to an expenditure which has been given some publicity in the press and which appears on page 41 of the auditor general's report, section 157. I quote:

Mr. Justice G. B. O'Connor of Edmonton is chairman of the Wartime Labour Relations Board, and Mr. Justice M. B. Archibald of Halifax is chairman of the National War Labour Board. Ottawa is headquarters of the boards. Order in Council P.C. 80/5000 of June 29, 1944, accepts the following submission by the Minister of Labour:

The undersigned has the honour to refer to orders in council P.C. 1895 and 1896 of March 16, 1944, appointing Mr. Justice G. B. O'Connor, Chairman of the Wartime Labour Relations Board and to P.C. 1986 and 1987 appointing Mr. Justice M. B. Archibald, Chairman of the National War Labour Board;

And to report that while authority has been granted to pay the travelling and living expenses of the chairmen above referred to

while absent from their places of residence, the undersigned arranged with Messrs. Justice O'Connor and Archibald that Mrs. O'Connor and Mrs. Archibald's necessary living and travelling expenses while absent from their places of residence, while accompanying their husbands in the discharge of their duties, would be paid by the department;

The undersigned, therefore, begs to recommend that authority be granted to pay the necessary living and travelling expenses of Mrs. O'Connor and Mrs. Archibald while away from their homes accompanying their husbands while they are discharging their duties as chairmen of the boards to which they have been appointed.

The order in council is silent as to the authority relied on for the making. Attention is drawn to the provision for payment of expenses of Mesdames O'Connor and Archibald, as it is an exception from practice. In the fiscal year \$8,658.33 was paid to Judge O'Connor and \$6,150.01 to Judge Archibald by way of travelling and living expenses. These sums include claims paid with respect to travel and living expenses of Mrs. O'Connor and Mrs. Archibald when travelling from home to Ottawa, at Ottawa, and when travelling with their husbands to various points in Canada.

The point I wish to make is this. Does the comptroller of the treasury investigate any criticisms such as the one made here?

Mr. ILSLEY: No. The comptroller of the treasury could not do anything in these cases except to comply with the order in council or the treasury board minute authorizing payment of these judges on that basis. The comptroller of the treasury would simply look at the order in council or the treasury minute and follow that. The criticism of the auditor general is not a criticism of the comptroller of the treasury but of the government in that case for making that arrangement for these two judges. I remember the expenditure well, and I recall the sequence of events. One of the departments of government made that arrangement with one of these judges. They had to make that arrangement in order to get him to come. As the auditor general says, it is out of line with the general practice, but, after all, there was authority to pay the judges—

Mr. PROBE: I am not querying the payment of the judges.

Mr. ILSLEY: No, but there was authority to pay them. Ordinarily, in time of peace, there is no authority to pay judges, but there was under the War Measures Act such authority to pay them for doing special war services. It did not seem to make very much difference whether a judge was paid 50 per cent more per diem for himself—or thereabouts—or whether his wife's expenses were paid. That arrangement was made in one case, and in another it was exactly similar. At a certain stage the treasury board made up its