

brought in at a time when, as I understand it, he was within the precincts of the house. There was no effort made to have these estimates brought before the committee because of the fact that the hon. gentleman was not present. I was prepared then, and would have welcomed the opportunity, to discuss the administration of the house, rather than to have the hon. gentleman suggest that I endeavoured in any way to avoid such discussion. As a matter of fact I welcomed the criticism of the hon. gentleman. I did believe that hon. members were not fully aware and should be informed as to the administration of the house, because of general ideas with regard to its administration and the staff. I was hoping for an opportunity to bring these matters before the committee.

I say now definitely that no understanding was reached with anyone, neither with the minister who was leading the house at the time nor with any other hon. member, that these estimates should be discussed in the absence of the hon. member for Simcoe East.

FURTHER SUPERVISION OF EXPENDITURES—SUGGESTED COMMITTEE TO REVISE RULES

Mr. R. W. GLADSTONE (Wellington South): Arising out of the discussion on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Simcoe East (Mr. McLean), I should like to direct a question to the Prime Minister, and as a basis for my question I should like to interject two or three sentences.

During the time I have been in this house I have on two or three occasions advocated the adoption of business principles and practices in the administration of the affairs of the government. Once I proposed a minister of economy; again I advocated a change in the rules of the house, and at other times I have urged that greater consideration should be given the estimates having to do with the expenditure of money. I should like to ask the Prime Minister now if the government will give consideration to the question of providing a more businesslike method of dealing with the estimates; and also with regard to a recent press forecast of the creation of some department to supervise expenditures, if they will keep in mind the desirability of securing a very competent, experienced man to direct that work, preferably one who does not reside in Ottawa and has no connection with the set-up of the civil service organization here.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): The hon. member for Wellington South has given a great deal of thought and attention to the question of

economy in connection with public business, and has offered many suggestions in that regard, including, some he has repeated this morning. I may say that time and again the government has given close thought and attention to the matters to which he has referred; but, as he will realize, some of them involve far-reaching considerations, so that it is not always easy to effect changes just at the time they may seem to be most necessary. However, I can assure my hon. friend that the matter will be further considered.

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggar): I was just going to add a word to what has been said about the business of the house, since this is the last opportunity I may have to do so. I wonder if during the recess the government would consider the advisability of setting up a committee to inquire into the procedure of the house itself. It strikes me that the time has arrived when some attention should be given to the rules of the house; I think that has been demonstrated very clearly during the present session. I would urge that some consideration be given to the setting up of a committee as soon as the house assembles in January, so that we may go into the whole matter of procedure and endeavour to modernize the rules and thus facilitate the public business of the country.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): In connection with the same matter, I feel that if we set up such a committee to change the rules we should clarify those rules as they apply to standing committees of the house.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Speaker, as hon. members will realize, at a time of war there are bound to be reasons why the procedure should not in all particulars be the same as in ordinary times. Without doubt the rules have had to be more or less altered. Amendments have had to be made to the rules, with the consent of the house, to enable certain procedure to be adopted. I question, however, whether a time of war is the best time to attempt anything in the nature of a general revision of the rules. I do not think that procedure which would be suited to a time of war would be equally suited to times of peace. But I agree with hon. members that procedure is as important at one session as at another. Because of the exceptional nature of procedure in a time of war it might be advisable to review that aspect of the situation. I shall endeavour to see that consideration is given to that possibility between now and the reassembling of parliament.