

Mr. CRERAR: As Mr. Speaker pointed out, if the committee wants to investigate that and their powers are not broad enough, they can come back to this house and get the necessary powers. When the committee is set up, as it will be under this motion, and it meets to consider the public accounts if it wishes its powers expanded in order to consider these newspaper allegations, so-called, of Mr. Thompson, it can come back to the house if necessary and have the matter considered then.

Mr. GRAYDON: May I ask the minister a question?

Mr. CRERAR: Just a moment. These allegations or so-called allegations of Mr. Thompson have been the subject of a good deal of discussion here this afternoon. You can scarcely pick up a newspaper to-day, particularly newspapers opposed to the government, without finding somewhere some criticism of the expenditures of the government.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): But that is not by a government official.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. CRERAR: As the Minister of National War Services (Mr. LaFleche) has pointed out, what proof has the hon. member for Weyburn that Colonel Thompson ever made those statements?

Mr. COLDWELL: That is what we want to find out.

Mr. CRERAR: If we are going to investigate everything of that kind, every rumour that appears in the newspapers, this house will be busy doing nothing else. I rose mainly to make clear to the house that the government has no objection nor does it take exception to an investigation of the public accounts by the public accounts committee. I feared that the remarks made by the hon. member for Lake Centre—I do not think he wished to convey that impression—might be taken in the country as an indication that the government had something to conceal in the public accounts and was reluctant to have them considered by this committee set up specially for the purpose.

Mr. J. GORDON ROSS (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I have tried two or three times to get the floor. I just want to say a word in regard to the remarks that have been made by certain members of the war expenditures committee. I do not intend to discuss anything that took place in the meetings of the war expenditures committee that were held in camera; I am going to discuss only what happened in the open committee. Each sub-committee was given the right to determine

whether it would sit in camera. Personally I was against holding open sessions of the main committee, and I would vote against that procedure in a committee such as the war expenditures committee. I want to be practical in this house. I am not going to spend my time in a committee for the purpose of helping certain members of the committee to get publicity in the newspapers, to have their speeches go out to the public. That is what would be done. If I am ever put on a committee of that kind again I certainly will not stay on it unless it sits in camera, because I am not going to waste my time in that way.

The hon. member for Danforth (Mr. Harris) has said that the members of the committee on the government side voted as the treasury benches wanted them to vote. I want to say that every member on the government side of the house has just as much responsibility and feels his responsibility just as much as any member of the opposition in regard to any matter brought before a committee of this House of Commons. No member of the government, the whip, no minister, no member of the cabinet intimated to any member of the committee on the government side what he should do in regard to matters that were to come before the committee. It is not very judicious, it is not very nice for the hon. member for Danforth to make a statement of that kind when he knows as well as I that no one ever said anything to the members on the government side about what they were to do in that committee, any more than anyone would say anything to him about it.

Mr. HARRIS (Danforth): He knows they were voted down.

Mr. ROSS (Moose Jaw): You know you were voted down? Each man took his own responsibility in the voting; it was not at the instigation of any member of the government or of the treasury benches in this house.

I do not know a thing about the matter that is before the house at the moment, except from what the minister referred to a moment ago. The hon. member for Weyburn makes quite a little noise in this chamber every once in a while, and sometimes he makes quite a little noise in the country. He generally asks or tries to ask for something which he knows cannot be done.

Mr. COLDWELL: Not in this case.

Mr. ROSS (Moose Jaw): Not in this case? He is asking that the public accounts to the end of February of this year be brought down. That is an utter impossibility, as my hon. friend knows.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): Nonsense.