

*Military Establishments—Fires and Thefts*

and parliament at Westminster conducted an inquiry into treasury matters—it was known as the treasury commission—and our present treasury methods are largely the result of the recommendations of that commission.

Then, to bring the examples closer to the subject matter under discussion, I know that most members will recall—and most certainly the Minister of National Defence will do so—the Esher commission of 1904, which was a judicial commission headed by Lord Esher and which made recommendations that resulted in a complete reorganization not only of the British army but of the department of national defence and of the allocation of tasks within the department of national defence. May I remind the hon. members who have not recently read the findings of the Esher commission—when there is any suggestion that the appointment of such a commission is a derogation of the responsibilities and duties of members of parliament—that the Esher commission even went so far as to recommend what duties the prime minister of Great Britain should perform in relation to the supervision of national defence, and that commission outlined generally the duties of ministers, the duties of the general staff, of the adjutant general's branch, of the quartermaster general's branch, and of the whole military organization. Those recommendations brought about reforms without which it would never have been possible for the United Kingdom to go into the war of 1914 with an organization which was capable of performing the great services it rendered to Great Britain and to the whole free world.

Here in this country we have had commissions which have dealt with subjects that most certainly come under the authority and the responsibility of members of parliament at some point. Only a few days ago, I have reason to believe, approval was expressed on both sides of the house of an indication that the government proposes to carry out another recommendation of the Massey commission. The very fact that the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) was making this announcement indicated that this subject is one which must be dealt with by parliament if it is to be dealt with effectively. I have seen no suggestion that there was any derogation from the authority and responsibility of members of parliament when the Massey commission was appointed to inquire into subjects which must be dealt with by this House of Commons and by parliament if the recommendations are to be implemented.

Then at a time when we have reason to examine the estimates of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation it perhaps is appropriate to remember that the Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation is simply the Canadian broadcasting commission under a new form and that the Canadian broadcasting commission was set up as a result of the recommendations of a royal commission appointed by the government of Canada. In addition, there are a number of members who will recall that a royal commission conducted an inquiry into certain episodes connected with customs in this country, and that, as a result of the recommendations made at that time, there have been for a great many years no major scandals connected with customs.

There also have been a number of commissions appointed to deal with railways, shipping and other matters of the kind. In every single case those commissions were called upon to deal with subjects which ultimately would call for examination by the House of Commons and parliament if anything effective was to be done.

May I point out what a strange conclusion we would be led to if we accepted the proposition that the government has on some occasions put forward. If the government believes that it is a derogation of responsibility to appoint a royal commission to inquire into something that relates to the duties of government, then what does the government say about its appointment of a royal commission to inquire into the irrigation project and the power project in Saskatchewan which has been requested so frequently and with such vigour by the members on this side of the house?

If the government does not think that such a royal commission should be appointed, surely it is to be hoped that this thought was not in their minds when they appointed such a commission to deal with that tremendously important project at a time when the members of this party, and of all other parties in the house, were urging the government to act, and to act promptly, to carry forward this great and very beneficial undertaking.

No, Mr. Speaker, the history of royal commissions is a history of inquiries which have produced many of the major reforms in our administrative system, as well as in the detailed duties of government and of parliament. Granted, there have been in this country and in other countries royal commissions which have not done all that was expected: the fact remains nevertheless that over the years most of the major reforms in the organization of government, in the reorganization of military services, have been the result of inquiries of this kind. It was in fact because of the inquiry conducted by what was known as the Otter commission that there was a re-organization of the militia in Canada prior to the great war, which