

our investigation during the recess. I do not know that I agree with the hon. member for Yorkton that we should go around and visit the different plants. I doubt very much that I would be in favour of that. But I would be in favour of having some continuous connected time for our investigation so that we can really deal with this thing. I ask members present whether it was sensible towards the end of the session to appoint a group of men who could meet only eight times many of whom were not able to be there all the time, and who could only hear a story told them, very pleasantly, of certain things that were happening. But the main things never came before that committee because the main things are the sale of plants, going concerns, and that is dealt with by the Minister of Reconstruction. I am not complaining about that. That may be quite all right. But what I am saying is that either the committee should never have been set up at all or it should have been allowed to do something. I do not want this house to make a fool of itself in the eyes of the public. That is what we are doing. I think that the operation of the committee is inconsistent with the picture that was drawn by the Prime Minister—I wish he were present to hear what I am saying—and with what he said and said so well the other day about the part which this house should play.

I finish as I began, by saying that I object to the history of this committee; I object to our being now dissolved after three or four weeks, for two reasons. First of all, we were just beginning to get hot, as the phrase goes, to get to a position where we could have gone ahead with some intelligence. Now we are going away for two or three months, and when we come back I suppose it will not be possible to set up the committee the first day we return, and if we do, we have a dozen other things to occupy us. This committee is dealing with hundreds of millions of dollars of the assets of the people of this country. One can only look on all this as a bad joke, or something to get angry about, and I alternate between one and the other.

Mr. HACKETT: I suggest to the minister that I might ask a question which he could answer at the same time as the questions he is about to answer.

Mr. CHEVRIER: I want to reply to what the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario and the hon. member for Yorkton have said. In the first place let me say that in my opinion this discussion is superfluous, and I say this having in mind what the Minister of Reconstruction said when this whole question

was debated on his war appropriation estimates. I would not like to take up too much of the time of the committee, but I think in fairness to the Minister of Reconstruction I should point out that in the course of the debate on the war appropriation estimates a large part of the subject matter of this discussion was gone into. I pause for a moment to quote what the minister said as reported in *Hansard*, page 2349.

I should like to point out that there has been a duplication in the first item, in that departmental administration is also in the civil estimates. I mention that so that when we discuss it now it will not be necessary to discuss it again in the civil estimates.

In the civil estimates we have item No. 308, "departmental administration, including expenses incidental to organization, \$1,500,000." That was gone into fully at that time. And I cannot see why it should be gone into now. However, as I said a moment ago, some statements were made here this morning which I think should be replied to. The discussion which took place in the committee had to do with the alternatives which were mentioned a moment ago by the hon. member for Yorkton and the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario. I do not know whether the hon. member for Muskoka-Ontario made a motion, but I do know that the two alternatives suggested to the committee were, first, that they sit after prorogation, and, second, that a royal commission be set up. It was pointed out that if sittings were to take place after prorogation they would be irregular because of the rules and proceedings of this house. As for a royal commission, I cannot see how a royal commission would be of any value at this time. Nobody has suggested that there were any scandals, nobody has made any charges, and if there were any charges to make, it was before the committee that they should have been made. The hon. member for Yorkton said in his statement a moment ago, "There is monkey business going on." Well, if there is monkey business going on I think it is up to him to say where the monkey business is, and if on his responsibility as a member of parliament he has any charge to make, let him make it.

Mr. MACKENZIE: On his responsibility as a member.

Mr. CHEVRIER: He should have made it before the committee. Did he make it then? I say to him that he did not, but he chooses the dying days of the session to say, "There is monkey business going on." The place to make a charge of monkey business is before the public accounts committee.