

the other day to the press by the director of economy control, Colonel Thompson. Those statements are pretty serious. When a paper with the position of the *Ottawa Journal* proceeds to quote the director's statements, putting them in quotation marks, it seems to me the house and the public accounts committee should take serious cognizance of the fact. The press statement says:

Colonel John Thompson, the government's uncompromising economy director, to-day had just about reached the end of his tether.

He had found it increasingly impossible, he told the *Journal*, "To cope with all the crazy waste and extravagance which some eight months ago he was assigned to control if not eliminate".

Then in quotation marks:

"Evasion, subterfuge and outright trickery" are being used to nullify the work of the office of government economy control.

Thousands of dollars have been spent on office supplies, furniture and equipment, he charged, without the requisitions ever having been submitted to him for examination and approval or rejection.

Piled on his desk this morning were many of these requisitions which had reached him only after the orders had been placed and filled, and the bills for them accrued.

With these requisitions were the "accounts payable" for supplies which had been purchased without his authorization.

One of those accounts was for \$2,500, covering but one printing job.

Colonel Thompson has kept a file of such records of "subterfuge, evasion and trickery", to prove, if necessary, how the office of government economy control has been short-circuited.

Each time the colonel has received these "accounts due" for office supplies, which have been purchased without his approval, he has marked them, in red ink, "payment refused".

Some of the accounts have been accrued with private business houses and with printing shops other than the government's publishing establishment.

"I don't know who will pay them, or how", declared the colonel, "but certain it is that I will not approve payment."

I want to draw the attention of the house to the fact that those statements have been made by an official. I know nothing about his qualifications, but I assume the government must have been satisfied with them when they appointed him to this office. He has made what amounts to a very serious charge with reference to waste and extravagance in the conduct of government business.

It seems to me that this is not a matter merely for the executive or for the government; it is a matter for the entire House of Commons, something which ought to be gone into thoroughly by a standing committee. It is true that there is a war expenditures committee, but that committee recognized that there were certain limitations to their work. I should like to quote from page 92 of

[Mr. T. C. Douglas.]

the minutes of proceedings No. 3 of that committee, which contains the following in regard to the acquisition of the air field at Gimli:

It is not the duty of this subcommittee to supplant the responsibility either of the public accounts committee or the civil courts. This subcommittee does not express any opinion as to the need for further inquiry. In the light of the request made by the solicitor for the *Winnipeg Tribune* the subcommittee believes that such an inquiry, if deemed necessary, could be more satisfactorily made as above indicated.

I quote that for the purpose of pointing out that the war expenditures committee recognized that matters of this sort, dealing with money already spent or with the manner of the spending of such money, is a matter for discussion by the standing committee on public accounts. This is a matter to which the house ought to give serious consideration. It has often been stated that many of our functions have been usurped, but there are two great functions which this house still has. One is the duty of voting supply, and the other is the duty of scrutinizing all accounts paid or payable.

If we allow a situation of this kind to go unchallenged and without investigation, then we private members of the house are derelict in our duty. I want to make this appeal to the government and to the house. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilsley) has told us that during the next year the people of Canada are going to be asked to lend to the government the sum of \$2,750,000,000. That is a tremendous figure. It will be lent to the government only as a result of considerable sacrifice on the part of the people of Canada. The members of this house will be asked, to urge upon the people of Canada that they make this contribution, and they will gladly do so. But if the people of Canada ever come to feel that this money is not being spent to the best possible advantage; if we ever allow the people to feel that there is waste, extravagance, or, as this report says, subterfuge and outright trickery, then we shall weaken in every fibre our war effort. This house can strengthen the morale of the Canadian people by asking the public accounts committee to examine the public accounts not only up to March 31, 1942, but all accounts up to the present time, and to have Colonel Thompson appear as a witness to discuss these questions which have been raised in the public press. I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Noseworthy):

That the motion be amended by adding the following words:

"and that the committee be empowered to examine accounts up to the end of February, 1943, and to investigate the work being done by the office of the government economy control."