

*Public Accounts*

which we introduced was experimental in nature. The stage has now been reached at which many of the reforms we brought in then need to be modified in the light of our experience. I am not suggesting that the committee should meet tomorrow and bring forth changes the following day. I recognize that the committee has other responsibilities. But there is no reason why a sub-committee should not be set up to deal with this matter. One has only to hear the outpourings of dissatisfaction and annoyance coming from private members, particularly those on this side of the House, to realize that something ought to be done by way of improvement. But this warning is by way of a preliminary to what I have to say about the particular committee we are being asked to consider this afternoon.

● (2:20 p.m.)

I am glad to see that the public accounts committee is going to be re-established. This is one committee in which, certainly over the last 12 years—with one exception last year with which I propose to deal later—there has been a sort of non-partisan, objective approach on the part of a number of Members of Parliament operating on behalf not only of their constituents but of all the people of Canada. They have examined, scrutinized and challenged the cost of government under capable leadership and brought to the attention of the people of Canada details of extravagances, aided by the Auditor General and the officials of departments who have appeared before them.

Ever since 1958 when the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), as Prime Minister of the day, re-established the committee as a viable and useful entity with a member of the opposition to chair it—now a member of the other place—the committee has had a very effective and useful life and has done yeoman service for the people of Canada.

For that reason, I am glad to see the committee being set up under terms of reference embracing the report of the Auditor General. I think we are lucky to have a very valuable and useful occupant of that position today. It is interesting to note that there have been, I do not know how many Prime Ministers, 15 or 16—there may be some scholars on the other side who can tell me the exact number we have had—yet there have been only six Auditors General.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** The number is 15.

**Mr. Baldwin:** I thought at times the number might have been 13, but I am now told it is 15. However, there have been only six Auditors General in the same period. The present occupant brings a lot of useful character and knowledge to the position. It is of interest to note that during the last few days he was unanimously recommended for re-appointment as Auditor General of the United Nations, this being his third term. I think this inures to the benefit of Canada and it is of some satisfaction to us to realize the value of the present Auditor General. However, I would not be fulfilling my duty in

[Mr. Baldwin.]

speaking to the House today if I failed to point out that by an anomaly, as far as salary is concerned, which is one of the matters dealt with in the evidence that the motion asks to be referred back to the committee, the Auditor General receives substantially less than his assistant.

In the area of the accountability of governments for spending, I think this is a shocking condition. I hope that when the committee is appointed under its terms of reference, as I am sure it will be, the committee will turn its attention to this particular problem. Some recommendations were made by the committee. I agree with some, I disagree with others, and I must say that there were some that could only be compared with the perverse verdict of a jury in the face of overwhelming evidence before them. However, as I say, one of the matters that must be dealt with by this committee is this salary situation. The qualifications of the assistant Auditor General are very high, and I have great respect for him personally. Yet under the terms of the statute that now governs the operations of the Auditor General and his office, we find this very ridiculous situation prevailing. When the committee is established, I hope it will see fit to turn its attention to this particular issue.

The need today for this committee in terms of the examination made by the Auditor General is very high. This is an age of bureaucrats, and we have a government of bureaucrats. I am not against bureaucrats; indeed, we have to have them today, though we have a particularly invidious group sitting opposite us who are well schooled in the art of being a bureaucrat. However, it is helpful to know that in order to meet the challenge of bureaucracy it is essential to have a public accounts committee, and that it is essential to have terms of reference that permit the closest and most detailed examination of the operations of the bureaucracy as it is spread throughout each department. This, in turn, involves some examination of the changes made in the functions of the Auditor General. This is one reason that the terms of reference to which I have referred included the requirement, as an integral part of the motion, that the evidence taken before the committee last session should be referred to the present committee.

On this issue, as well as on the issue of the relationship of the committee to the Auditor General and of the Auditor General to the government, it is fascinating to read in the evidence, evidence that is quite relevant in this context, some of the statements that were made by Professor Norman Ward, probably the outstanding and acknowledged authority on the public purse, the operations of the Auditor General and the public accounts committee. His credentials are impeccable. He is objective and non-partisan. He is the author of several books and was apparently the last witness to appear before the committee last session. I should like to put on the record before I conclude some of his evidence in the hope that what Professor Ward said will commend itself to members of this committee. When they come to deal with this particular aspect of the functions and duty of the Auditor General, and to deliberate thereupon, I hope they will not