

made. I am anxious, the government is anxious, as indeed we all are, to see that every possible brake is put upon extravagance and waste and that wrongdoing is prevented and punished. But that does not mean that we should lend ourselves and the time of this house to attempting to run down all the suspicions, newspaper allegations and the like which may be raised.

We had that matter up only a day or two ago, in connection with an article in a magazine called *Boating*. It contained a number of allegations, and several hon. members talked about "charges"; the press was full of "charges" being made against the government. The Minister of National Defence for Naval Services (Mr. Macdonald) made a statement to the house giving the true position, and we have not heard a word of the matter since. Yet the allegations of the publication in question were all set forth as charges that ought to be investigated by some committee of the house. I submit that the way to maintain the morale of this country at this time of war is not to create all kinds of groundless suspicion based on newspaper statements, but rather for everyone to join in seeing that before charges are made which are calculated to create suspicion in the public mind there are grounds for them.

Just this word in regard to the public expenditures committee. There are two sides to every question. The idea that the procedure of obtaining information in camera is followed because the government is merely seeking to avoid inquiry in an entirely false conception of the purpose that holding meetings in camera is intended to serve. Our committee on public expenditure is following precisely the method followed at Westminster. I think our people are no better and no worse than are those at Westminster, but at Westminster they have had a degree of experience in regard to some of these matters that we in this parliament have not had, and I think in this particular we are safe in following the example of the old country. The reason inquiries are held in camera in the war expenditures committee is that that method furnishes a better guarantee that all information will be readily given and given without fear of it being misconstrued and misused. Take an inquiry in the open; a question is asked of a witness on the stand, no one present knows what the question is going to be until it is asked, whether it is a question which if answered will give comfort to the enemy or if not answered will give equal comfort to the enemy because suspicion is aroused. If

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

the question is asked in the open the witness has to hesitate and ask himself, will I be justified in giving this answer, or will I be blamed after it has been given for having told something I should never have told? That is the purpose of having the inquiry in camera. It is in order that it may be possible to elicit from officials and every source as full information as possible.

The thought that when a member of the committee gets hold of information with respect to some wrongdoing he is precluded from having that subject subsequently investigated is a wrong inference altogether. There is no ground for that. The inquiry in camera affords to hon. members of this house an opportunity of getting hold of wrongdoing in a way that they would never have otherwise, just because they are able to probe into such things to an extent they could not do in public. If a member investigating in committee finds something that is wrong I have said over and over again that it is his duty to come and report the wrongdoing to the minister of the department concerned, to the Prime Minister if needs be, thereby to give the government opportunity to see whether a prosecution should be started immediately or some other step taken. But if a member does not care to take any of these steps, if he has in his possession information which is evidence of wrongdoing, let him bring the matter up in the public accounts committee. Surely it is not too much to ask that he should be in a position from information he himself possesses to take the responsibility himself of saying, this ought to be investigated.

Surely parliament at a time like the present must, in its actions, be governed by responsible considerations, if matters are to be investigated by parliament. An investigation by parliament is not a small thing, it is a big thing. If there is to be an investigation by parliament on any matter, let the inquiry be based on some reliable and responsible action on the part of some member of this house, not on some newspaper article the representations of which may or may not have any foundation.

Mr. COLDWELL: I am not sure whether we are discussing the point of order or the amendment. I wish to speak briefly to the point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: The relevancy of the amendment.

Mr. COLDWELL: To the relevancy of the amendment. The Prime Minister has made much of the fact that any member of the