

*Appropriation Act No. 8*

**Mr. McIlraith:** The hon. member for Ontario says this is a special case. The Auditor General is dealing with special cases every day. He has all the files. He does this audit job on a continuing and continuous basis. Surely, this request is based on nothing logical. In any event the wrong method is being used.

**Mr. Knowles:** Mr. Chairman, the request is not to refer the matter to the Auditor General but to refer it to the public accounts committee.

**Mr. McIlraith:** But the duty of the public accounts committee is to deal with the Auditor General's report.

**Mr. Monteith:** In 1968?

**Mr. McIlraith:** Surely, it is not our function, on some hypothetical proposition of an hon. member, to ask the committee to go off on another task quite inconsistent with their duties?

**Mr. Starr:** Don't tell us about our duties in parliament.

**Mr. Bigg:** As a member of the public accounts committee, I can tell the minister that at present we are seized with the 1964 report. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre is quite correct, that if we wait for the usual wheels to grind we will be considering this matter some time in 1968 or 1969, and it is urgent that we look at it now.

I think the public accounts committee could ask for information on this matter now, but we would like to be sure it will not be prevented by some procedural hassle from doing that.

**Mr. McIlraith:** The purely legal question has already been determined in the constitutional way by the government getting the legal opinion of the law officers of the crown.

● (5:50 p.m.)

**Mr. Benson:** Mr. Chairman, in dealing with this matter, I might say that it really does not matter to me who looks at the transactions. As a matter of fact, I have tabled in the house all the documents which the Auditor General would look at, except the individual salaries and the amounts being used, but I am having these typed out now. If anyone wishes to verify these amounts he may do so. The Auditor General will be doing that in any event. The whole situation is there. If there is anything else anyone wishes to have produced, I am willing to do so.

**Mr. Barnett:** Mr. Chairman, I am a little surprised at the argument the house leader has advanced. In the first place, he suggested that the public accounts committee could deal only with public accounts. It seems axiomatic that a committee of this house deals with any matter which the house deems advisable to refer to it. If this matter is to be referred to a committee, then it seems that the public accounts committee is the logical committee.

In respect of the points just made by the Minister of National Revenue, I should like to say that as I have listened to the recent discussion it did not seem that anyone was expressing dissatisfaction with what the minister has done in the way of tabling information. It does seem obvious, however—and this I feel is the point the house leader is missing at the moment—that what is in the minds of some of us is we would like to have some orderly way set out in which we could give proper consideration to the information which the minister has placed before parliament. If for no other reason than to avoid protracted arguments back and forth across the house, I think it would be a sensible decision to have these documents which the minister has tabled and the whole question of this unusual approach in providing moneys to pay government accounts, considered in the standing committee. I think this is the point. It seems to me that basically this is what the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre has been suggesting. I would suggest, even if for no other reason than to give an opportunity to have an orderly and perhaps a more quiet examination of the questions which are raised and which are quite serious in the minds of many members of the house, that the proposed referral of this matter to the public accounts committee would be the responsible way to handle the situation.

**The Chairman:** Shall the clause carry?

**Mr. Churchill:** No, Mr. Chairman. I made a grave mistake in getting the Minister of Public Works into this question. He has just added confusion to the issue. I promise I will not do that again, because I wish to get this matter straightened out by clear minds. I am sorry that the Minister of National Revenue is holding up the proceedings of this house by the attitude he is taking.

**Mr. Benson:** I take exception to that. I have spoken only a very few words. I am not holding up anything. I have produced every document which has been requested. Tomorrow I am going to table the latest list