

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

July 11, 1947.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts met this day at 3.00 p.m. The Chairman, Mr. L. Philippe Picard, presided.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, we have a quorum so we may start.

Mr. CLEAVER: Mr. Chairman, I believe I was examining the witness when the committee swung over to a discussion of procedure. Mr. Beaudry says he has one corrective question that he would like to submit. Is he here?

Mr. SARTO FOURNIER: He will be back in a moment.

Mr. FLEMING: While we are waiting for Mr. Beaudry to come back I would like to discuss the question of what we are going to do after today. I think probably it is the wish of all members of the committee to know as soon as possible, exactly what we are going to do. We had some indication down in the House in the last few minutes that prorogation may come a little earlier than was expected yesterday, and that the House may not be in session more than two days next week. I think probably it is the desire of all members to know exactly where we stand on the matter of our meetings. I indicated, Mr. Chairman, when we were discussing the question of procedure on Wednesday afternoon, that I was going to ask the committee to recommend to the House in its report, that a royal commission be appointed to investigate the administration of the Veterans' Land Act with a view to three things. The first is to see that justice should be done to the veterans in the matter of prices to be charged to them and the quality of construction which they are entitled to expect. The second is to see that justice has been done to the taxpayers of Canada and that they are not being mulcted unmercifully. The third concerns operations within the department in that they should be carried on without negligence, if it is no more than of the kind exposed in the case of Sarnia.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not want to interrupt you, but I think if we are going to discuss the whole of our work up to now we should first finish the evidence. If I may be permitted to say so at this moment, if we want to talk of what we are going to do for the next few days, all right, but I do not think the moment has arrived to discuss what we are going to put in our report. That will be the subject of a special meeting.

Mr. FLEMING: I was nearly finished, Mr. Chairman, and I merely mentioned I was going to ask the committee to appoint a royal commission for the purpose I have outlined. The matter of calling witnesses from Windsor which I asked last night does not affect that. In other words I am going to ask for a royal commission whether we hear the witnesses from Windsor or not, based on the evidence we have already had concerning the Sarnia project. The proposal that we should call witnesses from another project, namely Windsor, was suggested by me because some of the members felt or expressed the view that the evidence we had heard from one project was not enough, because that project or experience might not be typical. If the committee is going to take the view there is not time to hear witnesses from Windsor or anywhere else, I suggest that we decide that as soon as possible. I want to be perfectly frank to the committee by saying that I am going to ask that a recommendation be included in our report to the House regarding the royal commission whether we hear the witnesses from Windsor or not. I just mention that the time is short and that we should plan our meetings accordingly.