

opinion of certain hon. members I, as Prime Minister, should have done. The hon. member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Leader) says that the Prime Minister should have accepted the proposed amendment, and the hon. member for Lake Centre (Mr. Diefenbaker) says that the Prime Minister should tell the house now that he will see that the public accounts committee does so and so. Well, a grievance I have had against some prime ministers has been that they have assumed altogether too much the role of dictators, that they have tried to take away from the House of Commons the rights which private members have, and to take everything into their own hands. I have tried to see that the rights of private members were protected, and I propose to follow that course. The rules of this house have been framed, not for the purpose of enabling a government to refuse to do things which are in the public interest, but to help to protect private members in their rights; and experience in this house has taught me that as soon as one begins to interfere with the rules of the house as they have been established out of the wisdom of many minds and the experience of many years, one is likely to be taking a course which, instead of increasing the rights and privileges of hon. members, will be depriving them of some of those privileges and rights. That is sound and true and cannot be too carefully remembered.

If I had done what the hon. member for Portage la Prairie said he thought I should do, and agreed to the reference of some subject because it was one of suspicion, although I knew that the rules of the house had been framed so that among other things the time of the house would not be taken up in hunting out and running down suspicion wherever it arises but should be devoted to matters which are of importance and of real concern, I might have sought to follow his suggestion but the only effect would have been, as Your Honour has said, that I would have been ruled out of order by yourself. It is part of my duty as well as the duty of Mr. Speaker to see that the rules which this house has adopted and the statutes which govern its procedure shall be observed, and I am only discharging my duty to the House of Commons as its leader when I take steps to point out that a motion is out of order when the rules of the house clearly indicate that such is the case.

Now, as to instructing the public accounts committee on what they should do: I think the gentlemen on that committee are quite capable of arriving at their own decision as to what they should do, and I do not propose to interfere with them at all. If they reach a decision that a certain individual should

appear before the committee or a certain matter should be investigated, and so report to the house, I shall be prepared to back the report. If they come here with any request I shall certainly take cognizance of it, and act in accordance with what I think is the right procedure. But I claim it is altogether wrong for a—

Mr. MacINNIS: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister speaking to the amendment or is he speaking to the point of order? If he is making a second speech it is not at all in order on the point of order as to which you, Mr. Speaker, asked if there were any remarks to be made.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I am perfectly agreeable to saying nothing further, but I would point out to the hon. member that he, of all hon. members, takes up plenty of the time of this house in discussing amendments. I have no desire to delay the house, but I do object to hon. members on the other side being permitted to create the impression through the country that the government is seeking to prevent investigation and inquiry, while I myself am not to be permitted to make perfectly clear that we are allowing the fullest inquiry that can possibly be allowed.

I have already said that the public accounts committee has the full right, if the house approves, to inquire into anything which its members may ask to have investigated. On that committee are hon. members representing all parties in this house. It is true that it contains a majority of government supporters, but the people of this country are going to take account of whether the majority does or does not do what is right.

I was about to say when I was interrupted that I do not think it is right or proper for any hon. member to say that the members of any committee, be it public accounts or war expenditures or any other, are fashioning their conduct in accordance with what direction may come to them from the treasury benches. I have been on the treasury benches for a good many years, and in all the years I have been a member of any government I have never once asked any member of a public accounts committee not to have a particular matter investigated which ought to have been investigated. May I say further, so that my position will be perfectly clear, that if any hon. member of any party knows of anything which is wrong, any expenditures which should not be permitted, any waste or extravagance, if he wishes to bring that matter before the public accounts committee I for one will back him to the full in endeavouring to see that an investigation is