of the Minister the simple idea of forming a board of management composed of the Deputy Minister of Finance, the Auditor General and two accountants. These accountants would receive as a fee for attendance at the meetings of the board an amount not exceeding $3,000 a year, and the four men comprising the board would have experience and standing. They would investigate, not the details of accounting or bookkeeping, but the systems of accounting followed by the various institutions spending public money, and for the purpose of such investigation they would, under section 13, employ the very men whom my right honourable friend has described. Section 13 provides:

13. The Board may with the consent of the Minister of Finance, engage from time to time, such skilled assistants as may be required to facilitate the work of the Board, and such assistants may be paid out of any available appropriation such compensation as the Treasury Board may allow.

There is no limit. Skilled accountants may be selected because of special knowledge in the business to be investigated. Some accountants specialize in certain lines, others in other lines. I understand there are a few high-class men who specialize in railway accounting. Such men will be selected to carry on investigations. This is only a surmise, but I think that it is probably a correct one, as to the workings of this board.

Hon. Mr. GORDON: I do not know how a Bill could be drafted to suit the right honourable the junior member for Ottawa (Right Hon. Sir George E. Foster) better than the present Bill. As I understand it, the Board of Audit is to be composed of four members, and the sum payable to each is $3,000 per annum.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: For the outsiders.

Hon. Mr. GORDON: That is the fee payable to the two outside members, and it is a fairly large one. The directors are to have authority to secure assistants and pay them any remuneration. There is no limit to the salary which may be paid. So it appears to me that this is exactly what my right honourable friend the junior member for Ottawa desires. Perhaps he had not looked at clause 13 before he spoke.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: I wonder if we are all clear on the point that this Board is expected to hold office only until the first day of July, 1925. The arrangement is not permanent. As I understand this Bill, the purpose of it is to provide for a review of the various systems of accounting in the Public Service and in the Canadian National Railways.



Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: And in other institutions that are receiving public money.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: The aim is to standardize the methods of accounting and improve them if possible. The Auditor General of Canada and the Deputy Minister of Finance, together with two experienced, competent accountants who are ordinarily engaged in commercial accounting, are to be a temporary board until July, 1925. They are to direct an investigation into the systems of accounting in the various Departments of the Public Service.

Hon. Mr. BELCOURT: And make recommendations.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: Yes. I personally think that the idea is a commendable one, except that I would respectfully suggest to the Government that there might be a semblance of interference on the part of the Finance Department and the Auditor General in the affairs of the Canadian National Railways—an interference which, according to all indications, the Government are endeavouring to avoid.

Our railways in Canada have a very up-to-date system of railway accounting. The Canadian Pacific Railway about 15 years ago made an exhaustive inquiry into the question of railway accounting and adopted generally but with some improvements a system that was in vogue on a number of large railway lines in the United States. Since that time the Canadian Pacific Railway have had first-class accountants of their own, and the tables have now been turned; American railroads have during recent years been sending representatives to Canada for new ideas in railroad accounting. The Canadian Northern Railway a number of years ago adopted the system of accounting in use on the Canadian Pacific, and that has gradually become the system on the entire Canadian National Railway system. The Grand Trunk always had a different system, but I think it is being merged into the general Canadian National System now. However, I would respectfully point out to the Government that the system of accounting in vogue in the accountants' offices in the several departments of the Government and in the Auditor General's office itself vary greatly from the accounting systems of our railroads. I would hesitate to recommend the acceptance by the railroad management of the opinion of an accountant in the Public Service as to the best system to adopt for