

Mr. CAMERON (*High Park*): I do not think we are giving it to you. I understand that is what you want and I do not see that we are giving it to you.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Cameron, I think when we write our report, we will have this before the Committee. The Committee approves of it and in our report we will recommend that this very thing you suggest be given to Mr. Henderson.

Mr. LEBLANC: Will that mean that you will be obliged to amend section 23 (1) to make it more concise?

Mr. LONG: There is no problem with the authority and there is no problem with what the Treasury Board and the Governor in Council did. This is quite in order.

Mr. LEBLANC: I understand that. They did exactly what they could do in accordance with that section. So, legally, they are on the right side. But then, if you go further and say that no account should be deleted unless that amount is recovered—which, in that case, they did not do—or if section 23 authorizes them to delete the account, it may authorize them to delete it after having tried to recover the amount, then that would mean an amendment to the Act, would it not?

Mr. HENDERSON: I think it is important for the Auditor, in these circumstances, to examine the files to be satisfied that proper steps were taken toward a collection effort before this executive action took place. We do that in all the cases where we can. Here is a case where we found debt had been written off very easily for perfectly sensible reasons.

● (12:05 p.m.)

The CHAIRMAN: I think, gentlemen, we will be able to discuss this more fully when we are under the chapter on "accounts receivable". Am I right, Mr. Henderson?

Mr. HENDERSON: Indeed. That, to me, is quite important because of the point I made earlier.

Mr. THOMAS (*Middlesex West*): Mr. Chairman, before we go on from there, I think we should be a little bit careful about it for this reason: there is a special circumstance, it has been said, surrounding some elderly person who does not know the law and whom it might be very harsh to even acquaint with the fact that there has been an over payment. I am a little afraid of this effort to collect. If there is some way by which the interests of the government and of the public can be protected without hurting the sensibilities of some people, if, in the interests of the Governor in Council, it is felt that they should not be so interfered with, then I think we should be careful to give that due consideration.

Mr. HENDERSON: I think you will appreciate it is only the principle that I am concerned with here and, under no circumstances, the particular case. I think it is a valid one and a proper one to be raised.

Mr. THOMAS (*Middlesex West*): I agree with Mr. Henderson on that. There is a matter of principle involved. I was throwing out a word of caution. As far as I am concerned, it appears to me there might be a danger of harshness in dealing with some cases.