

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

House of Commons,

March 29, 1949.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts met this day at 11.00 a.m. The Chairman, Mr. L. P. Picard, presided.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, we have a quorum.

As I open the first meeting of the Public Accounts Committee for the 1949 session I wish to thank you for the confidence you have shown in me by electing me as chairman of the committee. I will do my very best to discharge my duties, if possible, to the satisfaction of all.

We have been together on two other occasions during the sittings of this committee, once in the fall of 1945 and again in 1947. I think I can say that I have had the co-operation of all members and that has contributed to the successful work of the committee. I expect that there will be again the same co-operation from everyone.

I do not wish to make a speech on this matter because I think everyone understands the situation and we wish to proceed as quickly as we can. The Public Accounts Committee has sat only four or so times in the past twenty years and the sittings have occurred at about this same period in the session so we can conclude that we are not late in getting the members together for our work.

Before we start I think it would be appropriate to say that the rules of procedure in committees and standing committees are the same as the rules for the committee of the whole.

Item No. 605 on page 81 of Beauchesne's parliamentary rules and forms, second edition, reads "Generally speaking, the proceedings of a select (special) committee are assimilated, like those of a standing committee, to those of a committee of the whole House".

Standing order No. 58 reads "The standing orders of the House shall be observed in the committees of the whole House so far as may be applicable, except the standing orders as to the seconding of motions and limiting the number of times of speaking".

Standing order No. 47 states "All motions shall be in writing and seconded, before being debated or put from the Chair".

The word "seconded" does not apply in this committee but a motion should be in writing and put by the chair before being debated. So that we may have more order in the debates I think we should abide by that rule and although motions put to the committee need not be seconded they should be in writing, be read by the chair, and then be given consideration by the committee.

Another matter of importance before us is the appointment of a steering committee. I do not know whether you share my views but I do not like the expression "steering committee" and I feel that title indicates a body which runs the affairs of the committee. To me it seems that a more appropriate name would be the one which is sometimes used "committee on agenda and procedure". As far as I am concerned I prefer that title and it sounds more democratic.

It is usual too at the first meeting to have a proposal concerning the members of that subcommittee—usually seven in number—named by the chairman after consultation with all parties.