

Committee on Defence Expenditure

this committee it is also going to do its best to hamstring that committee and prevent it from conducting investigations into other matters which certainly should be investigated rather than the one question of the Currie report.

I do not intend to go further into this subject at this time. I think it is a matter of paramount interest to the nation, and one with which parliament should deal and deal now. I should like to make one reference to a matter which transpired yesterday and which possibly is sub judice now. However, I intend to make no specific reference except to the letter tabled yesterday by the Attorney General of Canada having to do with certain investigations and saying that following normal police practices certain matters had been referred to an individual. Without going into the details of any one matter, I wonder just what the reference to "normal police practices" means. We have heard a reference this afternoon by the Prime Minister to the police dealing with a national matter threatening the safety of the state and on a national basis. I have had some little experience with police matters as a prosecuting officer for many years and sometimes as defence counsel, and it is my experience that it is not the function of the police to conduct investigations on the orders of the Attorney General of Canada and then apparently to pass the matter on to an individual and say, "Either you deal with this or not", with the inference that if you do not you are failing in your duty to the state.

If there is a crime under the provisions of the Criminal Code, that is a matter for the attorney general of the province, and with that he should deal. If there is no crime under the Criminal Code and if it is a matter affecting the safety of the state, then it is one with which the Attorney General of Canada should deal as attorney general and not simply table correspondence in the house saying that the matter has been referred to an individual, and will he now please make up his mind what he is going to do about it. I doubt if that is consistent with the way in which matters of this kind should be dealt with, and I think it is something which will cause concern to all who do not want to see the intervention of police in matters which at one moment are termed criminal and at another moment savour of a political investigation. These, sir, are simply some observations of many that could be made on this report at this time.

Mr. Jean François Pouliot (Temiscouata): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak today only as a member of parliament or as a member of the Liberal party. I want to speak

in another capacity, that of a taxpayer—a modest taxpayer who tries to abide as well as he can by the law of the land. I find that the contest between the C.C.F. and the Progressive Conservatives to steal, not another copy of the report but the show of political propaganda, from each other, is rather childish. Last week, leaving aside countless interruptions and elaborate and learned dissertations on points of order, for three days—with the exception of the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Claxton) and the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), only five Liberals and fourteen opposition members spoke. There were nine Progressive Conservatives, three members of the C.C.F. and two Social Crediters. Two opposition members spoke for every supporter of the government who spoke.

Last session the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) criticized the appointment of Mr. Currie to make the report which has been referred to so often.

Mr. Fleming: No, he did not.

Mr. Pouliot: I remember that he complained about Mr. Currie's appointment.

Mr. Fleming: He did not.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to make a correction. There is no record of my having criticized the appointment of Mr. Currie—in this house or outside the house.

Mr. Fleming: At any time.

Mr. Pouliot: I am very glad the hon. gentleman has said that because now he considers Mr. Currie to be a great oracle.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, in a matter that affects a very definite question of the acceptance of Mr. Currie, I wish to make it clear that I have at all times expressed my confidence in Mr. Currie. That confidence has gone back for a great many years.

Mr. Pouliot: That is very good. Then he is an oracle and the Leader of the Opposition had no reason to rise again. He, and the C.C.F., swear by Mr. Currie's written word—

Mr. Fleming: The Liberals are swearing at him.

Mr. Pouliot: —and not at all by his spoken word. They do not want him to appear before the committee which would be appointed in virtue of this motion. The Progressive Conservatives and C.C.F. together do not seem anxious to controvert the veracity or exactitude of his pronouncements and to know whether they are well founded in fact or not. On the other hand, the Minister of National Defence, whose conscience is clear, says: Let us call Mr. Currie to give evidence before the committee.