

Mr. BURTON: Mr. Chairman, while the Act has been passed and while steps have been taken, nevertheless I would contend, with all respect, that we, as a public accounts committee, have a perfect right to examine into the expenditure of public money. Consequently I do believe that Mr. Nicholson's motion should be referred to the steering committee, and, if possible, arranged for on the agenda so that the members of this committee who wish to enquire into the expenditure of public money may have an opportunity to get the information they desire. Nothing may come of it, but, in spite of the fact of the other committee sitting and dealing with the operations of the railways and shipping owned and operated by the dominion government, I submit that we are the committee whose function it is to enquire into the question of moneys being spent.

Mr. JACKMAN: If we should follow Mr. Burton's suggestion, then this committee would have the power to inquire into any department whatsoever. Such a procedure would certainly upset the whole scheme of our arrangements. So I would suggest to Mr. Nicholson that if he wants to have an examination with respect to the procedure followed by the firm of auditors which audits the Canadian National Railways accounts, he first follow the suggestion of the chairman that the committee hear Mr. Sellar; in other words, that Mr. Sellar first be called to testify before the Railway and Shipping Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other comments?

Mr. FRASER: Mr. Chairman, personally I feel that what we are about to do is to put the cart before the horse. I believe that we should first hear Mr. Sellar. Then, after we have heard his statement, we will be in a better position to know what is what because we will have received his ideas. We do not want to find ourselves in a position where we cannot study things which ought to be studied because our agenda is already clogged up.

The CHAIRMAN: All these suggestions from the members of the committee will be referred to the committee on agenda and procedure which will, in turn, report to the main committee. We are just starting out today and I do not think we should close the door this morning. Personally I have no objection to our hearing from Mr. Sellar first of all.

Mr. FRASER: That is what I mean, Mr. Chairman. I submit that Mr. Nicholson's motion should not take precedence over our first hearing from Mr. Sellar.

The CHAIRMAN: We shall look into that question in the subcommittee.

Mr. MAYBANK: Mr. Chairman, I think though that what Mr. Fraser has said is substantially correct. We have got a good two or three days' work lined up now with Mr. Sellar, and it seems to me that quite a number of things might come up as a result of his being before us; people may have a number of ideas as to what they would like to bring forward. If we start laying out too many things now, inevitably some would be thought deserving of precedence over others. I do not want to move, gentlemen, but I should think the agenda committee should consider the suggestions already made here this morning and proceed on the lines suggested, opening on Thursday with Mr. Sellar. He will be here for more than one day, and at the conclusion of his evidence no doubt there will be many matters before the committee. We might even get enough work lined up to last us till Christmas, if people are really interested in following matters which may arise to their conclusion.

Mr. FLEMING: I would like to support fully the remarks made by Mr. Maybank, because there is a very great danger at the present time that we might tie our hands too much if these motions which are now being put on the record are regarded as anything more than suggestions.

The CHAIRMAN: That is what they are.