

Why No House Committee?

Remarking that there was a persistent rumor that the Prime Minister was disposed to back away from the appointment of a Committee of the House to investigate Chippawa expenditures, Hon. Howard Ferguson asked yesterday in the Legislature when the Prime Minister proposed to implement his undertaking in that respect.

"The Government has been looking into the matter carefully and has no intention of backing away from the investigation, but there is a possibility the investigation will take a form otherwise than a Committee of the House," said the Premier. "That is not decided."

"There is to be no investigation by a Committee of the House?" asked the Conservative Leader.

"There may not be. No," said the Premier.

Mr. Ferguson retorted that, in that event, he intended to move that a Committee of the House make the investigation. The Premier said that was his privilege.

The Conservative Leader then recalled that the Prime Minister had gone so far as to name the committee. "The House is entitled to know why the radical right-about-face," he declared.

"It is not, perhaps, a right-about-face, but a right turn," said the Premier. He promised the House would have the fullest explanation, stating that the question was too serious to be handled by any investigation which would not be comprehensive and fair.

"Surely a Committee of the House is capable of making the investigation?" said Mr. Ferguson. He was utterly opposed, he said, to any Commission narrowing down the inquiry. The charges were wide and had been made in the House. The Liberal Leader had made the suggestion for a Committee of the House and the Premier had agreed to it. Now the Premier was telling them they were going to have another kind of tribunal.

ROYAL COMMISSION TO PROBE CHIPPAWA NOW SEEMS CERTAIN

A Royal Commission of three members, instead of a select committee of the Legislature, as originally proposed on the floor of the House by Premier Drury, will likely investigate Chippawa expenditures. That was the suggestion advanced in authoritative sources yesterday, following Premier Drury's announcement that the proposed Chippawa investigation might take a course other than that which the Government previously had in mind.

Still another alternative, less likely to be acted upon than the former, however, is that of investigation and deliberation by the Cabinet itself. The Government, it is understood, has given some consideration to that method of inquiry; whether the Cabinet Council, in receiving evidence, would sit privately or publicly, was not stated. In considering the suggestion, the Government had in mind leaving that point to be determined by the Cabinet itself, if such an inquiry should get under way.

The reasons that have prompted the Government to abandon the idea of inquiry by a House committee are understood to be that, since an investigation was first proposed and discussed, Government members have come to the conclusion that it is a much bigger task than was anticipated. It has been thought that a House committee "would never get through"; also that members were too much tied to the House itself by the importance of the matters to come up to give any portion of their time to discussing and weighing Chippawa matters.

That the Royal Commission, if appointed, will consist of three members, rather than a single member, was readily admitted yesterday. It is understood that a trio of Judges is not what the Government has in mind, but rather, perhaps, a single Judge to act as Chairman, with two practical men, possibly engineers, to act with him.