

five weeks whereas the usual custom is for it to appear on the first day of the session. The government then had not been preparing for business up to the beginning of the sixth week. The next order of business is "Government orders," and here we have the following order:

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion of Mr. Lapointe that in the opinion of this House, in view of the recent general elections, the government was justified in retaining office and in summoning parliament.

This was the ill-fated motion introduced on the first day, which was so adroitly thrust aside by the right hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Meighen). This motion was introduced by the leader of the government following the time honoured precedent by which parliament asserted its rights and powers to discuss and to attend to any public business before proceeding with the Address from the Throne. In presenting that motion the leader of the government announced to the country and to the world that under our constitution the people rule, and that the representatives of the people in parliament assembled are supreme. It was then the right and the power of the government to present any question of public importance for the consideration of this House without proceeding with the Speech from the Throne, and giving it precedence over the Speech from the Throne. The leader of the government followed that up by another motion which was presented to this House on the 8th January, which will be found on page 11 of Hansard, which reads as follows:

Hon. Ernest Lapointe (Leader of the House): I move, seconded by Mr. Macdonald (Antigonish-Guysborough) that the Speech of His Excellency the Governor General to both houses of parliament be taken into consideration on Monday next, and that this order have precedence over all other business of the House except government notices of motion and introduction of bills, until disposed of.

Hon. members will notice that the government especially excepted two orders of business which they could have proceeded with, even if the Speech from the Throne had not been disposed of. They could have brought in during that time notices of motion on which bills could be presented to this House and discussed by the hon. members. These bills could have had a first reading and could have been laid upon the table, and put into the hands of hon. members in order that they might study them and be prepared to discuss them when they came up for second reading. But no bill has been introduced and no business has been presented to the House; consequently I claim that the Minister of Agriculture is not justified in saying that members of the opposition are holding up business when there is no public business to transact.

In connection with this motion there is one significant fact to which I would direct the attention of the House. I took the trouble to look up Hansard for the first days of each session since this government came into office in 1922, and I found certain facts which are rather illuminating and which give us a clear indication of the intention of the government. I noticed that on March 8, 1922, the first session of the fourteenth parliament was convened. On the opening of the session, on the first day, the motion giving precedence to the consideration of the Speech from the Throne was moved by the Prime Minister, and in that motion he excepted the introduction of bills as the only order of procedure given precedence over the Speech from the Throne. On the first day of the session a special committee to select the standing committees was named. On January 31, 1923, the second session of the fourteenth parliament, the same procedure was adopted, and the only order of business given precedence over the Speech from the Throne was the introduction of bills, and again the special committee to select the standing committees was named. On February 28, 1924, the third session of the fourteenth parliament was convened, and the same procedure was adopted. The introduction of bills was the only matter before the House that was excepted, and a special committee to select the standing committees was announced. On February 5, 1925, the fourth session of the fourteenth parliament, the same procedure was adopted. The only order given precedence over the Speech from the Throne was the introduction of bills, and a special committee to select the standing committees for the session was named.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government of the day had the right, if they so wished, to except other matters of business, but in those four sessions of the fourteenth parliament it was clearly indicated on the first day that the government intended to proceed at once with the public business. They took the proper steps to do so. They made provision for their standing committees to function during the sittings of parliament. But what do we find on January 7, 1926, at the opening of the first session of the fifteenth parliament? The same procedure was adopted with regard to the Speech from the Throne. The motion was introduced and the government especially excepted introduction of bills and also government notices of motion. The first time that government notices of motion had been excepted, and another exception, a very vital one, was that the government did not name a special committee to select the standing