

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is customary at this stage for the leader of the government to make a motion to the effect that the speech of His Excellency the Governor General to both houses of parliament be taken into consideration on a subsequent day, and the day usually fixed is the following Monday. However, as hon. members are aware, in order to deal with some urgent public business, the session has been called earlier this year than usual, and also, I hope, it may make it possible, in the course of the following year, for prorogation to come earlier than it has of late. The government has sought to arrange the business of the house in accordance with a procedure which, we hope, will expedite its business and meet with the convenience of the members generally.

I understand that my colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. St. Laurent) has had some interviews with the leaders of the different parties, and that, while no definite agreement has been reached, agreement is possible on the course of procedure and a program that might govern during the next few weeks. I shall therefore indicate to the house what, in the opinion of the government, would be the most expeditious and advisable procedure to follow in the course of the next few days.

Unless there is good reason why it should not be carried out, the government's intention is to have the mover and the seconder of the motion for an address of thanks to His Excellency in reply to the speech from the throne speak at a later stage this afternoon and to have the debate on the address continued on Monday of next week. The government would have preferred to have had the debate on the address left over for some weeks, to be resumed after particular measures we have met together to consider immediately have been dealt with. I understand, however, that the leaders of the parties opposite prefer that they at least be given the opportunity to speak immediately on the address. If that is the case, the government will agree to have the debate continued on Monday next by the leaders of the different parties with a reply to be made by an hon. member from this side of the house. Then it is proposed to adjourn the debate. May I say that for this there is ample precedent. There have been other occasions where the debate on the address has been left over for some considerable time. There is no rigid rule governing the time.

Having regard to the business of this particular session, the government feel that the course we are now proposing will be the best one to follow.

On Tuesday of next week it would be my intention to introduce a resolution to approve the Geneva agreement. The Geneva agreement, as hon. members are aware, relates to reductions in tariffs and to questions of trade, and is perhaps the most important agreement in matters of trade that has been arrived at by representatives of many nations at any time. The agreement has much in the way of promise of improvement of trade relations between the different nations of the world through the years to come. At least it is the hope and expectation that that will be so.

In connection with the consideration of the Geneva agreement, the government has thought it would enable hon. gentlemen opposite to speak on the agreement if we reserved Tuesday next for the leaders of the three parties with a reply to be made by someone on this side, and then, to meet a request made from the opposite side, to allow the debate to continue for another day. An adjournment of the debate would then be made. The entire debate on the Geneva agreement is likely to occupy a very considerable period of time. We could not expect it to be concluded between now and the end of this year even if it were the only question before the house. But it is important, in considering other measures, that the house should have before it the larger objective which it is expected the Geneva agreement will serve, in order that such other measures as may be brought forward may be seen in their true light as temporary measures only, necessitated by circumstances which have arisen within the present year, and over which the government of the country has had no real control.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh!

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not know the source of amusement, but may I say to my hon. friends that if they were aware of conditions as they are in the world today, they would not smile at a statement that no single country has control of conditions throughout the world today and that every country in its internal affairs is more or less affected by those conditions. However, I have no desire to comment further on that at this time.

The intention then would be that on Thursday the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) would introduce emergent measures he has already announced to the public to