

interest to disclose it, how is it possible that any hon. member can, if he so desires, use in debate the information so disclosed? The two suggestions seem to be incompatible and inconsistent, and before we are able to acquiesce and agree to act or cooperate I think the Prime Minister should clarify the situation. I invite him to do so; if he does not, we shall be obliged to review the situation further before reaching a decision one way or the other.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): May I say to my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson) that I am obliged to him for bringing immediately to my attention any matter concerning which there may be the slightest doubt in his mind as to the intention of the government. With respect to the appropriation bill, which is the one that relates to the war expenditure, the procedure is in the first instance the presentation of a resolution; the bill being a money bill has to be preceded by a resolution which is approved by this house. The resolution is debatable in much the same manner as the bill itself. The resolution with the permission of the house was introduced yesterday and is now on the order paper. On the motion to go into committee on the resolution, general debate will take place. In the debate hon. members are free to make whatever representations they may wish with respect to its subject matter. If the resolution is adopted it will then be referred to the committee of the whole, and while in committee hon. members will be free to question the government on matters respecting Canada's war effort on which they may wish to have information.

Some questions may be asked to which it would not be possible, and others to which it would be unwise to attempt to make an immediate reply on the floor of this house. Whether or not the government would be justified in the nature of the reply it might make will of course be apparent from the nature of the reply itself.

When the committee stage is concluded and the resolution is referred back to Mr. Speaker and is finally passed a bill will then be introduced founded on the resolution. The bill will go through first and second readings, and after the second reading will, if the procedure proposed is followed, be referred to a special committee. The committee thought of is a committee which will be composed of hon. members from both sides of the house. It will have the right and the power to call for the production of papers and documents and to ask members of the public service, including

the heads of all three branches of the Department of National Defence, to appear before them. With respect to the appropriations that are being considered, such questions may be asked direct of the responsible heads of the defence services as hon. members may deem advisable. Obviously some questions will be asked calling for information which it might not be in the public interest or more particularly in the interest of the allied powers to have made public on the floor of this house or in any other way. Such information might, however, be imparted in confidence to members of a committee where it could not be given publicly. In saying this I hope my hon. friend and hon. members of the house will not think that the government would be trying in any way to withhold information which hon. members might wish to have and to which they are rightly entitled. Such information as it would be necessary to impart in confidence would be in the nature of military secrets and information that it would not be advisable to have given in a manner which might result in its reaching and assisting the enemy.

The government has left open for consideration the question whether it would be advisable to have one committee dealing with defence matters generally or committees to deal separately with the different branches of the service; for example, one committee to deal with matters relating to the army and another with the navy, and yet another with the air force.

I think I mentioned yesterday that it would be advisable that great care should be taken in the selection of the personnel of the committee or committees to which I refer. By that I mean that members of the different parties would be asked to select those of their number in whom they had the greatest confidence, having regard to the extreme importance of the matters which would be disclosed to members of the committee. That is not a reflection upon any hon. member of the house; rather it is a caution which it is important should be expressed by the government, which of course becomes responsible for all information that may be disclosed. I would say, for example, that any hon. member who had been a minister of the crown would naturally be first choice. A next selection might be from among members who have had wide parliamentary experience or special knowledge of the branch of the service to which the committee would be related, the purpose being to have on each committee as much experience and wisdom as possible in safeguarding matters of great public importance where such experience and wisdom were gained from long association with