

ask, in the name of common sense, what is there for the House to pass upon? Then we have this further question; "The grading and weighing of grain." Now, if there is anything in the world we would want to get advanced information on before we pass legislation concerning it, it is the grading and weighing of grain, because it is a most delicate and vexed question. The House and the country should know, in general terms, what is intended to be done, before any legislation is passed; it ought to get the fullest opportunity of knowing what the government's ideas are. That is the purpose of the rule as read by you, Mr. Chairman, and yet that opportunity has not been afforded us. I could go through the whole list of matters proposed to be dealt with, and we are left in absolutely the same position, without the slightest indication as to what is to be done. If the rule has any significance, if we are to have any regard for it, all right; but if the rule is to be treated in the way proposed by the Minister of National Defence let us strike it out altogether because it means absolutely nothing.

Mr. FORKE: I am almost afraid to venture into this discussion when I find so many lawyers who differ in their views. But I am going to use a little common sense in looking at this matter and see what I can make out of it.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. FORKE: I meant no insinuation whatever. There may be a very good reason for a rule of this kind and I can well understand the arguments of the right hon. leader of the opposition. At the same time it seems to me that the resolution deals with so many different phases of the subject, there is so much ground covered, there are so many different incidents which have to be considered in drafting the necessary legislation, that it would be impossible to give any definite information on the subject until the whole bill is brought down; and therefore it seems to me we are simply wasting time in this discussion. I think all of us have a pretty general idea as to the intent of this proposed legislation and my hon. friend the ex-Minister of Finance (Sir Henry Drayton) will get the information he seeks if he is just a little patient.

Mr. BAXTER: I can quite appreciate the remarks of the hon. member for Brandon (Mr. Forke), but he must remember that the position he occupies gives him peculiar facilities for knowing in advance the purposes of the government, which are not possessed by

members of the group to which I belong. If, of course, we were disposed to accept everything proposed by the other side of the House in the same gentle way that the hon. leader of the Progressives accepts it, we might expect, perhaps, to have sudden and violent division in our own ranks, with a departure of some gentlemen from positions of importance.

Referring to the point of order, my own view is that the rule is rather a burden upon public business; as far as I am concerned, I would rather the rule did not exist. There are some legislatures in Canada that do not resort to it at all. But there ought to be—not for the information of the House, but for the information of the country—distinct notice in advance, so as to permit the country to be apprised of important changes in legislation on any subject that interests a considerable number of the people. That, I take it, was the original object of the rule, and while we have the rule it surely ought to be observed. For my part, I would gladly vote for the repeal of the rule and the substitution of a system which would provide that a bill should be introduced and remain on the table for a certain number of days before any discussion could take place. I think that would save the time of the House and dispense with a lot of unnecessary printing. But the position we are in to-day is that we are asked to pass a resolution which conveys absolutely no meaning. It is not within the spirit of the rule at all events. We are asked to pass that resolution because a minister of the crown has handed over to some other gentleman—and quite properly—the duty of preparing the resolution, though that gentleman has prepared a resolution that is utterly inadequate and out of line with the spirit of the rules. If every time a blunder is made we are asked to accept it we will soon have an end of all rules; and I do not see how the members of this House can very long be expected to conform with alacrity either with the spirit or the letter of the remaining rules of the House, if any one of them is to be put out of service in this somewhat summary fashion. My hon. friend the leader of the Progressives (Mr. Forke), with his easy channel of communication—which reminds one of the subway from the Central station to the Chateau Laurier, an easy and convenient mode of communication—knows, of course, what the words "transportation of grain" in this resolution refer to. I have not that advantage, not having the same intimate relations with members of the government to