

National Defence Contracts

importance, namely, the report that a group of Liberal members of parliament have met with the managing director of the Canadian Commercial Corporation for the purpose of discussing the placing of defence contracts on a patronage basis, together with the report that consideration will be given to reasonable demands for the distribution of some defence contracts where they may do the most good to party supporters.

I may say the last sentence is directly quoted from a dispatch coming from a well known correspondent in the press gallery and appearing in this morning's *Montreal Gazette*. I think the country would wish to have this matter discussed and cleared up at once.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member has moved the adjournment of the house in order to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance. The matter referred to is a report that a certain group of Liberal members of parliament have met with the managing director of the Canadian Commercial Corporation for the purpose of discussing the placing of defence contracts on a patronage basis, and so on.

This motion is moved under standing order 31, which reads:

(1) Leave to make a motion for the adjournment of the house (when made for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance) must be asked after the ordinary daily routine of business (standing order 15) has been concluded and before notices of motion or orders of the day are entered upon.

It seems to me the motion has been moved at the proper time.

(2) The member desiring to make such a motion rises in his place, asks leave to move the adjournment of the house for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, and states the matter.

(3) He then hands a written statement of the matter proposed to be discussed to the Speaker—

The hon. member has done that.

—who, if he thinks it in order and of urgent public importance—

I think I must determine now whether this is a matter of urgent public importance, taking into consideration the matters the house will have an opportunity to discuss from time to time. It seems to me this is a matter that can be discussed during the debate on the speech from the throne, which will be resumed in this house on Monday.

Mr. Coldwell: Before you make a definite ruling, Mr. Speaker, may I point out that so far as discussing this matter in the debate on the address is concerned, I should like to do so but I have exhausted my right to speak in that debate. In the second place, since very large amounts are being provided for

[Mr. Coldwell.]

defence expenditures, I believe it is a matter of urgency that this question should be discussed before any further contracts are let.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is right when he says he cannot speak on the amendment to the amendment, nor on the amendment itself; but I should point out that he will have an opportunity to speak on the main motion, since he has not done so already. Therefore in the debate on the speech from the throne the hon. member will have an opportunity to speak on this subject. I should also point out that I gathered from what the Prime Minister said the other day that he would endeavour to arrange the business of the house so that at least one day a week a motion for the house to go into committee of supply would be moved on a day when hon. members could discuss their grievances.

In view of what I have stated I do not think that under the rules of the house this is a motion I should put at this time.

Right Hon. L. S. St. Laurent (Prime Minister): This question having been raised, may I say that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) sent me notice of a question, which I received at five minutes to three, in the following terms:

Has the Prime Minister's attention been drawn to the report in this morning's *Montreal Gazette* concerning the appearance of the managing director of the Canadian Commercial Corporation before a group of Liberal M.P.'s a couple of days ago on the basis of which it is stated that there has been partial restoration of the party patronage system, with particular reference to defence contracts? Is this report true either in whole or in part?

I had not seen the report. Since the hon. member was kind enough to send me a copy of it, I have glanced over it. It is entitled, "Revolt reported in Liberal ranks aimed to restore party patronage," and was written by F. C. Mears, *Gazette* resident correspondent. It reads in part as follows:

Ottawa, March 9. A sixty-man revolt by Liberal members during the past week has produced a partial restoration of the party patronage system, it was learned today from several reliable sources, even though efforts have been made to keep both feet on the soft pedal.

I have never had any suggestion from any quarter whatever of there having been a revolt of sixty, or even of one member. My own impression is that the newspaperman must have been drawing very heavily upon his imagination, or must have been naïvely led up the path by what he calls "reliable sources."

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the Prime Minister has reopened this discussion, I submit it would be appropriate to have the motion which was placed before you dealt with.