

THE PREMIER'S SPEECH

DURING THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION TO APPOINT A ROYAL COMMISSION.

HON. MR. DAVIE—Hon. gentlemen opposite have made a sorry spectacle of themselves to-night. They have been saying that the government proposes to make a farce of this investigation; and yet, sir, what do they themselves propose but to make it a screaming farce. They propose that the government being upon its trial for corruption, shall themselves appoint a counsel to prosecute them. Well, sir, was absurdity like that ever uttered before? They have been comparing the government in this matter to criminals. Well, accepting that comparison. Did you ever hear of a case where a criminal in the dock had the right first of all to select his own counsel to defend him, and then without reference to anybody else, to select a prosecutor or attorney-general to prosecute him? And that is exactly what the hon. members opposite propose for the government to do! Now, if the government were to do anything of that kind, would the country then not denounce the thing as a fraud, an effort of the government to whitewash themselves at the expense of the country, and would ask: "To whom does this lawyer owe his allegiance but to the men that employed him?" I say that is a thing too absurd to be thought of for one moment. And it shows to what lengths hon. gentlemen have to go to get out of the very awkward position in which they are placed. Why, their object to-day all the way through is to shuffle out of the charges they have made against the government. First of all they do not propose to have any enquiry of any kind themselves, and when the inquiry is forced upon them they try to escape by raising false issues and side tracking the main one. Well, now, as to the course to be adopted in a case of this kind, happily we are not without precedent, twenty years ago this house was engaged in a similar matter. The parties were not the same as now, but there is a remnant of the party here, the hon. the leader of the opposition. Sir, what has he told us? He has

told us that it is perfectly absurd for the government to select the charges upon which they will be tried, you never heard a prisoner selecting the charges he will be tried upon; the prosecution does that. But what did he do then, sir? Now, I will show you. It is just as well to refer to precedents, and I will show you exactly what the course of proceeding was. On the 20th February, 1874, Mr. Robson, moved, seconded by Mr. Smithe:

"Whereas, certain statements have appeared in the public newspapers connecting the names of members of the late government and of the present government, with proceedings of a questionable character in relation to Texada Island, in the Straits of Georgia; and whereas, transactions are alleged to have taken place in respect to said island of a nature prejudicial to the public interest; be it therefore resolved: That a respectful address be presented to His Honor the Lieutenant-Governor praying that he will cause a royal commission to be appointed, with full power to take evidence under oath, and send for persons and papers, for the purpose of inquiring into the whole matter, and reporting thereon to this house at its next session."

Now, sir, at that time Mr. Robson was in opposition, and a prominent member of the opposition; the hon. leader of the opposition here was then a member of the government, he was not the leader, Mr. Walkem was the leader.

MR. SEMLIN—No; Mr. DeCosmos was leader.

HON. MR. DAVIE—Mr. Walkem was a member of the government at all events; I may be wrong in saying that he was leader. However, you have heard Mr. Robson's motion. There was no point of order raised against Mr. Robson's motion such as the opposition would now lead the house to believe would have prevented his moving for a commission in this matter. Now, Mr. Robson's