

As to the ex-Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Stevens), we shall probably hear so much in the course of this session as to the circumstances surrounding his resignation that it may be as well for me not to comment upon it at the moment. There is, however, one pertinent circumstance which I think must be apparent to all, and that is that not only has the government realized the extent to which it has lost the confidence of the country as indicated, from its unwillingness to fill vacancies that already exist, but that the minister who resigned did so because he had no confidence in his prime minister. The ministry to-day is without the presence of the ex-Minister of Trade and Commerce for the simple reason, as he has publicly stated and as is set forth in the correspondence which the Prime Minister tabled the other day, that he had not confidence in the Prime Minister's intention to carry out any reforms worthy of the name. These are all interesting circumstances and bear immediately upon the situation with which above all others this session of parliament is faced.

At this point I shall have to cease the compliments and come more immediately to the circumstances which have brought us together.

We have been told by the Prime Minister that the old order has gone. I must confess that when I think of what had occurred since the beginning of this new year, it seems that perhaps what the Prime Minister says is correct, that the old order has gone. But let us distinguish carefully as to what phase of the old order we refer. The old order is a pretty big order, if I may use that expression, embracing social conditions, industrial conditions, political conditions. Most of us as members of a British parliament had, I believe, rather hoped that the old order of parliamentary government as carried on under the British crown would be an order that would be preserved in this country, and not an order that we would discover was gradually disappearing, if not already gone. Let us stop for a moment to consider the old order of things as those of us who are members of this house recall it.

Usually when His Excellency the Governor General announced that he was summoning parliament and wished to have the attendance of hon. members in order that he might communicate to them the business for which he had called them together, hon. members waited until parliament was summoned to learn what the business was. They have felt

[Mr. Mackenzie King ]

that that was a courtesy at least that was owing to the sovereign or his distinguished representative. That custom as far as I am aware is one that has been followed in British parliaments everywhere, until this year. But someone greater in his own estimation than the crown's representative has appeared, and we are now beginning a new method of having the contents of the speech from the throne disclosed to the general public, before they are made known to hon. members of parliament. Is it not a time honoured custom, Mr. Speaker, that the speech from the throne is supposed, and rightly so, to be the first intimation to be given to hon. members of parliament with respect to the business for which they have been brought together at the call of the sovereign or his representative. Hon. members of parliament have not in the past become acquainted with the subjects which they were to discuss through the medium of newspapers or over the radio—by no means. They have usually waited—not very long; only a few weeks—until they had the privilege of meeting the sovereign's representative and hearing from his own lips what were the measures which upon the advice of his ministers were to be submitted to parliament. That old order apparently has gone, and I do not know that because of this fact we in Canada are any better off.

Further, it is customary where through the speech from the throne a government makes a statement of policy, or many statements of policy, for the ministry to have had ample opportunity carefully to consider and to mature the various plans proposed in the several policies. Whatever is contained in the speech is supposed to represent the carefully matured views of a united ministry, views that have been discussed in the cabinet, and which have been so formulated as to leave room for no possible divergence of opinion between colleagues. I wonder if that is the case to-day with respect to what appears in the present speech from the throne.

But let me go a step further, speaking of the old order which the present Prime Minister tells us is gone. Under the old order, when a prime minister put forth far-reaching policies, he was supposed to have sought and obtained the substantial backing of the members of his own party voluntarily given, not a backing that had been brought about by some order or command as under a Fascist regime. He was supposed to have had the benefit of the carefully thought out views of his party as expressed either at a convention or in conference or in the party caucus, so that he would be able to state without equi-