

Right Hon. Sir GEORGE FOSTER: (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, under ordinary circumstances, I would not make any objection to a motion of this kind although there is a doubt in my mind as to whether this constitutes such a question of urgent public importance as to justify the House in interrupting its course of necessary business in order to give up the time which will be consumed by this discussion. The matter referred to in the hon. gentleman's motion is:

The necessity of supplying munitions to Great Britain during the continuance of the war in view of the fact that they are being decreased and the stoppage of the same is threatened.

There is no doubt that this is an important question to various interests in the Dominion of Canada. If the decrease in munitions as manufactured and supplied from Canada, does not result in a decrease of effective and aggressive power at the front there is no Imperial menace and no menace to the Allies or to the Empire. There is no doubt in my mind—I do not imagine that there is any in the mind of any hon. member of this House—that whatever variation or restriction in kinds of munitions which have heretofore been made in Canada and the manufacture of which will be gradually decreased is well within the ken of the British Government and will be decided with absolute regard to the necessity for these munitions of war at the front. Therefore, it is a matter only of comparative urgency, simply to certain interests in the Dominion of Canada—

Mr. MACDONALD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I submit that under the rule of procedure, it is open to my right hon. friend (Sir George Foster) to take objection, but not to argue the question.

Mr. SPEAKER: As I understand, the right hon. member who is leading the House (Sir George Foster) purposes making an objection, and he is laying the groundwork for that objection. Otherwise he would not be in order in speaking at this stage.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Under the recently applied closure rule the discussion of this motion is not in order.

Mr. SPEAKER: This is not the closure.

Mr. PUGSLEY: But the closure rules apply.

Mr. SPEAKER: A certain amount of latitude will always be allowed by me to [The Speaker.]

the leader of the Government or to the leader of the Opposition in addressing the House or in giving reasons for taking a certain position. While the right hon. the leader of the House, as I understand, proposes to make an objection, I think it is but right that he should have opportunity to lay the basis for it.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: I had no other idea than to make an objection but I wish to give point to my objection by laying the groundwork. I have given one reason why I make objection, but there is another and a still more urgent one. This House has been in session for six months; we are approaching within four weeks of the time when the term of Parliament will expire by effluxion. We have very important business now on the Order Paper which we proposed to go on with this day. This motion is interposed. I think it is a matter of relative urgency, which the House should take into consideration, as between this motion and the measure which is before the House taking into account that it has to be passed through this House, and through the Senate, and that the time is very short in which to do that. I think the relative urgency is altogether in favour of going on with the regularly proposed business of the House. Furthermore, and stronger still, it is the wish of this House, and it has so been expressed that as soon as possible the country may come to a decision as to the point at issue. It is impossible for the country to have a basis of coming to a decision, unless we have a franchise measure and provision for the preparation of the lists passed by both Houses, for the country to give its decision upon. That is absolutely necessary. When these great matters absolutely necessary to the decision of the country are pending, why should we interpose with a subsidiary matter and one of less relative urgency? It is on these grounds, which might be amplified if it were necessary for me to do it—hon. gentlemen can see the point for themselves—that I object to the time and business of this House being broken into by the discussion of a question, the discussion of which cannot come to any final issue and which precludes the attention of the House being given to matters of infinitely greater urgency and more essential importance.

Right Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER: As to the latter objection which my right hon. friend (Sir George Foster) takes, that it is important to proceed with the consideration of the Franchise Bill which is