

*Supply—Formation of Ministry*

Everybody in this House knows why the right hon. gentleman who is to-day Prime Minister took the attitude he did. He took the attitude he did because it was the only attitude he could take in fairness to the House and country. The right hon. gentleman who leads the opposition stood up in this House the other day and without any notice announced: I have resigned the position of Prime Minister of this country; and when the present Prime Minister, who was then leading the opposition rose and suggested that there should be a conference regarding the remainder of the session, the ex-Prime Minister called him to order, and said: There is no Prime Minister. He objected to his discussing the matter with him at all. So there were only two courses left for the present Prime Minister. He could either have asked for a dissolution himself, since he had been called upon by the Governor General to form a government, or he could have said: We will attempt to carry on and fulfil the obligations of the late government to the people of Canada, and we will consider the convenience of hon. members, instead of sending them away for six weeks or two months, and then bringing them back again—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I submit that my hon. friend is entirely wrong in the first of his two alternatives.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order, order.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My hon. friend says there were two courses open to the present Prime Minister. One was to ask for a dissolution. I say that he could not have asked for a dissolution because he was taking the responsibility of a refusal of dissolution.

Mr. MANION: What I meant to say was an adjournment, not a dissolution, and I think that was clear from my speaking of sending the members away for six weeks or two months.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I hope hon. gentlemen opposite will feel that I was justified in rising at the moment.

Mr. MANION: What I meant was an adjournment, and I used the words six weeks or two months. He could have sent the members of parliament away to their respective homes in the various sections of this country, and then at the end of six weeks or two months have called them back, when as a matter of fact the business of this House could be finished up in three days, or at the most inside of four days or a week. Instead of that he took the patriotic attitude of considering the convenience of members, the

[Mr. Manion.]

patriotic attitude of considering the business of the House and of the country; and when he asked my right hon. friend the leader of the opposition to discuss matters with him he was met with a refusal, although what he did was best for this country and best for this House. To-day and yesterday we find the right hon. leader of the opposition opposing that attitude. The business of the House which has been carried on for six months, and surely that was long enough for a session, was all practically completed except the estimates, the bills that were to come back from the Senate, and two or three noncontroversial bills that are still to be passed. It looked, Sir, as if we should be able to finish in two or three days or in a week at most if hon. gentlemen opposite did not indulge in the obstructive tactics in which they are indulging at the present time. But what has happened? The right hon. gentleman who leads the opposition is simply holding up the House, he is doing exactly what he tried to do when he resigned, he is doing his best not only to embarrass this House but to embarrass this country: That is the attitude of my right hon. friend. I do not know that we can expect any different attitude from him as far as that goes. I do not wish to be personal in the matter but what I want to point out is this—that other prime ministers in other days took a different attitude, a contrary attitude to the attitude taken by the right hon. gentleman who retired the other day. Let me compare his attitude with that taken by Sir John A. Macdonald in 1873 when the government of the latter through a scandal also—not a scandal arising out of the administration of the Department of Customs and Excise but what is known as the Pacific scandal—was put in the same position as the late government was put in. At that time Sir John A. Macdonald did not take the attitude of retiring and saying to the then leader of the opposition, Mr. Alexander Mackenzie: "I will not discuss the matter with you. Get along as well as you can. I do not care how much I embarrass you or the country." He took the patriotic attitude, perhaps too much to expect from my right hon. friend, of standing in his place in this House and telling the leader of the opposition of that day that he was going to resign—that he had resigned in fact—but that he was ready to meet him and discuss matters with him and facilitate the carrying on of the business of the country and of the House.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I ask my hon. friend a question—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Sit down.