

Official Secrets Act

understand, in fact I know, that the commission has made a second interim report to His Excellency the Governor General. That report has been made to-day, and I hope to be in a position to table it to-morrow. The house will then have before it two reports from the commission before this matter is discussed by the house generally.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: To-morrow it is intended to table further reports, departmental reports and other returns, and, if the house is agreeable, we shall proceed with the debate on the address, the mover and seconder speaking, and then have the debate adjourned until Monday, when my hon. friend the leader of the opposition will follow.

We have just heard from His Excellency the Governor General that he will be taking his departure almost immediately, on Saturday in fact, and I have felt that hon. members of both houses of parliament would wish to give some expression of appreciation of the services which His Excellency has rendered Canada in such a splendid way during the time that he has been His Majesty's representative in this country. I purpose therefore to-morrow, if it meets with the approval of the house, at the beginning of our sitting to introduce a motion in the nature of a farewell address to His Excellency, which I know my friend the leader of the opposition will be pleased to second, and which hon. members will be free to speak to if they so desire.

There is nothing further to announce. I would therefore move that the house do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to and the house adjourned at 4.35 p.m.

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Friday, March 15, 1946.

The house met at three o'clock.

OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT

ARREST OF MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT—SECOND
INTERIM REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, before we proceed with the business of the house I wish to rise to a question affecting the privileges of this parliament. I do not intend to discuss their historic background, or to refer to the usages of the British parliament or the statutes of this parliament by which they are established. They will be found sufficiently outlined in the introduction

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

to Beauchesne's "Parliamentary Rules and Forms", third edition, 1943, part of which I will quote:

Several acts suspending for a time the Habeas Corpus Act have been passed in Great Britain with the special provision that no member of parliament shall be imprisoned during the sitting of parliament until the matter in which he stands suspected shall be first communicated to the house and the consent of the house obtained for his commitment, or if parliament be not sitting, then immediately after it reassembles in like manner as if he were arrested on a criminal charge. This is the general rule. The house is usually apprised of the cause of commitment of a member after his arrest and whenever he is in custody, in order to be tried by naval, military, air or courts-martial, or after he has been committed for any criminal offence by a court or a magistrate.

The newspapers report today that Mr. Rose, representative in this House of Commons of the division of Cartier-Montreal in the province of Quebec, has been taken into custody by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. This house has no knowledge of the charge or charges against him. If the suspected offence is indictable under our criminal law, either under the criminal code or by a special statute, then I submit that this house should be informed now of the nature of the charge, in conformity with the established usage.

If the newspapers are correct in stating that the action arises out of a disclosure of secret information laid before parliament, during the war, the offence would appear to be a breach of the privileges of this house and should be a subject of inquiry by the appropriate committee. I am confident that no member of this house, certainly not I or any member of our party, would condone improper or illegal action by any other member. But the privileges of this parliament must be safeguarded no matter who may be involved.

In my opinion the house should require a satisfactory statement from the government now, and I therefore raise the question so that we may receive it today.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, before coming into the house I received word from my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bracken) that he intended to ask a question which I believe would be very similar to the one which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Coldwell) has just put to me. Naturally I anticipated that a question of the kind would be immediately raised when the house met this afternoon, and therefore I shall proceed at once to make a brief statement—not the statement to which I referred yesterday, but a statement which I hope will help to explain the cir-