

Business of the House

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must ask hon. members to discuss the motion, and not to discuss other problems.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Ross (Souris): Mr. Speaker, they have many problems worrying them today. I shall not discuss them in detail except to say that they lost in the neighbourhood of \$2,000 million because of controls and embargoes. Then, there are other matters which are not satisfactory. I have in mind the United Kingdom-Canada wheat deal, in its present form. I could list many other items about which the people on the prairies are worried today.

As the elected representatives of the people, and as private members of the House of Commons, we should be given an opportunity to discuss those matters on behalf of the people. I cannot agree that there is the urgency set forth this afternoon by the Prime Minister, and endorsed by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell), the leader of the C.C.F.

I well remember that at the last session of parliament we were here on December 5, 1947, chiefly to discuss the urgency of the Geneva agreement. The house prorogued on the last day of June, 1948, leaving that matter entirely in the air. It has yet to be dealt with.

The government was elected about four years ago—in June of 1945. This is the fifth session of the twentieth parliament, and surely at a time such as this the government should be willing to have discussions of the problems confronting the people of Canada and to give private members the opportunity to do so, instead of throttling discussions as they are attempting to do today.

Many hon. members have serious problems to discuss on behalf of their constituents; and under this motion the members from various parts of the country would not have an opportunity for a long time to come to discuss those matters. Only the other day a minister of the crown made, in my part of the country, statements concerning government business and individuals which cannot be repeated and substantiated in the House of Commons. By this motion we would be denied the opportunity of bringing up that very important matter, one which has an important bearing on the dominion and the provinces, and upon individuals in the House of Commons.

Surely at this time the Prime Minister does not intend to be a party to that sort of thing in a free democracy such as we are supposed to have in Canada today. It ill behooves the government at this time, in the fifth session of a parliament, to offer such a motion. I

[Mr. Ross (Souris).]

should hope that it would be withdrawn and that the government would give serious consideration to these very important problems confronting the people of Canada today. Many who will be making their plans for the coming season of production are greatly concerned, and they would like an opportunity for discussion of their future possibilities. This motion would nullify that opportunity for a long time to come. It is not in keeping with the best interests of the country. I voice my disapproval of the motion proposed by the Prime Minister and amended by the Minister of Agriculture, and I do so in the interests of the common people of this country.

Mr. John T. Hackett (Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, I am not in a particularly bellicose frame of mind this afternoon. I should, however, like to discuss one or two aspects of this motion. Nothing clings to a man with more tenacity than a bad habit. During the war, parliament cultivated habits of disrespect for rules of parliament, habits which were justified by the national peril then existing. Since that time we have seen frequent recurrences of departures from the rules.

The rules of the house are not just arbitrary enactments; they have grown out of experience. This is not the time to trace any of them back to their origin. But it will be found that in most instances they can be traced to some successful effort to escape from tyranny, and from the abuses of dictatorship.

Parliament exists for the purpose of tempering lust for power, whether that power be vested in an individual or in a group. With great respect to the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Fleming), I do not consider that the gentlemen opposite constitute a new government. I see a few new faces in old places, and a few old faces in new places. But after all, they constitute the same government; they have the same policy, and, I fear, the same bad habits. There has been some change in leadership, and this would be a good time to escape from the follies of the past.

One of the disabilities that has been visited on this assembly as a result of the war is the abuse of emergencies. The government hatches an emergency every ten minutes. Every time there is a difficulty it is overcome by providing an emergency. I am not prone to criticize, but seriously, is there anything urgent or emergent before this house today? The fact that the motion, if carried, will not go into effect until ten days hence is an answer to that question. Ten days hence there may be no reason to introduce this motion.

I submit that there is nothing urgent or emergent about the motion. I suggest that it