

and the leader of the opposition in the words of sympathy they have extended to those bereaved, and in their appreciation of the work done by our deceased colleague.

ORDER OF BUSINESS THIS DAY—PROCEEDING TO
ORDERS OF THE DAY AND GOVERNMENT
ORDERS

Mr. SPEAKER: As this is Wednesday, the resolution (*Votes and Proceedings* 8th June, 1944, page 438) provides that the house shall meet on Wednesday at three o'clock p.m. and that the order of business shall be the continuation of business interrupted by the adjournment of the house on the preceding day, provided always that government business may be called on Wednesdays in such sequence as the government may think fit. The house therefore will proceed to orders of the day and government orders.

CANADIAN FORCES

REINFORCEMENTS—CHANGES IN THE MINISTRY—
CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER
AND MR. RALSTON

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the present meeting of the House of Commons has been occasioned by the controversy which has arisen out of the resignation on November 1 of the Hon. J. L. Ralston as Minister of National Defence, and the desirability of affording to hon. members an opportunity of discussing all matters in reference thereto, and in reference to the situation which has since arisen, and which is a matter of first importance to parliament and the people of Canada. I now wish to read the correspondence exchanged between the Hon. J. L. Ralston and myself concerning the resignation of Colonel Ralston as Minister of National Defence, including letters exchanged between us on the subject of the publication of this correspondence. Inasmuch as the correspondence contains references to discussions and deliberations in the cabinet, and is consequently subject to the rule of cabinet secrecy, it has been necessary for me to seek the consent of the sovereign to its publication. I have to inform the house that in accordance with the proper constitutional practice I duly advised His Excellency the Governor General that it was in the public interest that all of this correspondence should be made available to the House of Commons. His Excellency has been pleased to give his permission to this being done.

On November 12 the former Minister of National Defence issued an extensive public

statement on the subject. But for this statement, there might have been reasons of military security which would have made it necessary for me to advise His Excellency against permitting the disclosure of certain portions of the correspondence. In the circumstances, however, these reasons no longer obtain, since the references in the correspondence to which exception might have been taken on this ground have already been made public in the former minister's statement, which has been widely reproduced in the press.

The first communication is one from Colonel Ralston to myself.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Have these letters been printed, and are they available now?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I may say to my hon. friend that I had anticipated that the house would wish to have the correspondence in printed form at as early a moment as might be possible, and I therefore arranged to have the correspondence printed. After it has been read in the house, printed copies will be issued from the distribution office, and hon. members will find them in their boxes.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Why not have them now, so that we can follow them?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I think it would be proper that I should read the correspondence in the first instance, so that it may first appear in the records of the house and then be distributed. May I return to the first communication, which is dated the office of the Minister of National Defence, Canada, November 1, 1944:

Right Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King,
P.C., M.P.,
Prime Minister of Canada,
Ottawa, Canada.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

When I returned on October 18 from a visit to the Canadian troops in Italy, in north-western Europe and the United Kingdom, I felt compelled to recommend as a result of my own observations and inquiries in the battle theatres, and on the information and advice received from my officers, that due to infantry casualties being much greater than had been forecasted on the best information available, it had become necessary to secure substantial numbers of additional trained infantry personnel in order to make reasonable provision for the reinforcement of our troops overseas.

Since it appeared clear to me that enough volunteer personnel could not be made available to meet the need, I considered that I had no alternative but to recommend that N.R.M.A. personnel be sent overseas as reinforcements. I felt that this was necessary to fulfil our pledges to our fighting men.

The whole question was discussed at very considerable length both at meetings of the cabinet and of the war committee of the cabinet. My recommendation was not accepted.