

ing the rules may I say that I cannot accept the motion because it is not in conformity with the rule. The hon. member for—

Mr. GRAYDON: May I be allowed to appeal Your Honour's ruling?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. This is a matter that has already been discussed in the house. There is no appeal. I am not dealing with a point of order. I am dealing only with the interpretation of a rule. There is no point of order and therefore no appeal.

Mr. FRASER (Peterborough West): No justice.

Mr. M. J. COLDWELL (Rosetown-Biggart): I think every hon. member of this house realizes this afternoon the circumstances under which we are meeting. I suppose that seldom in the history of this country and in few other countries has a House of Commons met under similar circumstances. We are literally in the best historical sense of the word meeting in the capacity of the high court of parliament. A grave difference of opinion has arisen between the former Minister of National Defence (Mr. Ralston) and his colleagues in the government which has brought about his resignation. The Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) has called upon the gentleman who has, I think, earned the high regard of this country in organizing and leading the Canadian army overseas, as Minister of National Defence.

Mr. NEILL: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, what is before the house now?

Mr. COLDWELL: I think, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member asks what is before the house. There is a ministerial explanation given by the Prime Minister before the house. We have nothing in our rules to cover the situation, but it has been the practice in the British House of Commons that when a ministerial explanation is given remarks may be made upon it, but of course those remarks must be very brief.

Mr. NEILL: By everybody?

Mr. SPEAKER: By the leaders of the house.

Mr. COLDWELL: I was going to suggest that it is the duty—

Mr. BOUCHER: On a point of order, are the leader of the opposition (Mr. Graydon) and the leader of the government (Mr. Mackenzie King) the only two who are granted official status?

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. SPEAKER: A point of order has been raised concerning my remark that the leaders of the parties in the house should have an opportunity of expressing their viewpoints. It is true that there is only one official opposition, which is represented by the leader of the opposition, but in the course of our deliberations during these last four years recognition has been given those who are leading different parties in the house. We have always extended that recognition, and I would not now desire that those hon. gentlemen should not have this opportunity. I am proposing that the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell) and the hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Blackmore) shall have the opportunity of speaking, but I am asking that they be brief in their remarks.

Mr. COLDWELL: I shall be very brief. I was merely going to add that I think the procedure being followed, of presenting the correspondence to-day and giving members of the House of Commons an opportunity of reading and studying that correspondence and evidence before we make our individual decisions, is the proper course to pursue. No matter what opinions we may have formed I believe that at this time it is our duty as members of a high court to act in a judicial capacity, and not to judge a situation until we have all the evidence before us. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, I hope the government will place before this house every available scrap of information, and I suggest that neither the government nor the official opposition should hide behind the excuse that certain information might give comfort to the enemy if made available to this parliament. If there is such information, and there must be, then I suggest that where it cannot be given in public because it would give aid or comfort to the enemy, we should receive that information in private on our responsibility as members of this house.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): And hide it from the public.

Mr. COLDWELL: No. Hide it from the enemy. I say that we as members of this house have no right to play politics at this time; that we are here in a judicial capacity; that we must receive all the evidence, and we have no right to act in any other manner. I hope that during not this new session, as the leader of the opposition said, but this resumed session of the house, we may all act in the very best traditions of our parliamentary institutions.

Mr. J. H. BLACKMORE (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, I must say that the proposal made