

that he is not in his seat. Last session before the dissolution of parliament it was decided with respect to the inquiry into the Department of Customs and Excise that a commissioner should be appointed by a judge of the Exchequer court. That was done, and Mr. Justice Lemieux was appointed. I have never yet ascertained—it may have been announced in the newspapers—just why it was that the government when it came into power proceeded to make an appointment of its own, leading apparently to the resignation of Mr. Justice Lemieux and the appointment of another judge to take his place. It would seem to me, and I think to anyone who sat through last session, that the idea in having the commissioner appointed by a judge of the Exchequer court was that there should be no suspicion or partisanship in the appointment. You may remember, Mr. Speaker, that one amendment was that each of the larger parties might nominate a judge to form the commission of inquiry, but it was felt that that of itself might lead to partisanship, and so a judge of the Exchequer court was asked to make the appointment. I think it is due to this House that at some early opportunity the government should tell us why the change was made.

Another matter that I would like to call to the attention of the government is in connection with the Tariff Advisory Board. As I understand it, this is a fact-finding body. Then why should not the reports with a summary of the evidence be given to the public? If I am correctly informed, at present these reports are turned in to the Minister of Finance, and I have no doubt they will be of great advantage to him in determining the policy of the government with respect to tariff matters; but if the reports do not consist of recommendations, but rather a digest of a mass of evidence, it does seem to me that it would be a very great advantage to parliament and to the people generally that the facts in connection with tariff matters should be given the widest possible publicity.

Before I leave these miscellaneous matters, might I venture to suggest further that when the government brings in its measure providing for a change of the rules of this House some provision should be made by which the estimates, instead of being discussed in committee of the whole, might at least be first referred to an appropriate committee? This is done to a limited extent in the case of the railway estimates, and has met with very general approval. I am sure that any of the older members must have realized the immense loss of time involved

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

in attempting to discuss the details of estimates in a large assembly of this kind. It would seem to me that by this method the interests of the country could be very well safeguarded, and yet the business of the House be greatly expedited, especially when as at present members' speeches are being recorded for Hansard.

The speech from the throne makes reference to the Imperial conference, and already considerable time has been devoted by previous speakers to a consideration of some of the matters arising therefrom. There is not the slightest doubt that the Prime Minister has brought back some very excellent phrases. We must all admit that. I hope we will be able to use those phrases to very good advantage. But as one examines the reports that have been submitted to us in the newspapers, I am afraid that some of the subsequent paragraphs do not altogether bear out the full meaning of the phrases which are crowded into the front of the report. We are told:

The dominions are autonomous communities within the British Empire, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs.

Now, as far as I am concerned, that is very highly satisfactory, and yet I read on in the report—I might say that I have only the newspaper despatches to go on, as the House has not yet been supplied with printed copies of the report itself—I read:

That the principles of equality and similarity, appropriate to status, do not universally extend to function.

I have read that sentence again and again, and confess that I do not know what it means. I think a man would need to take a post-graduate course in metaphysics to know just what it does mean. Let me read it again, for possibly some subsequent speaker may be able to enlighten me.

The principles of equality and similarity, appropriate to status, do not universally extend to function.

Again, we are told that we are equal in status to the motherland, and yet later on with regard to foreign relations we find this:

Their delegates have recognized that in this sphere . . . the major share of responsibility rests now, and must for some time continue to rest, with His Majesty's government in Great Britain.

British diplomacy, it is suggested, can only commit the dominions to passive, not to active obligations.

Again, I confess that I am absolutely mystified. What are "passive" obligations as distinguished from "active" obligations? Further, we are told that: