

*The Address—Mr. Mackenzie King*

is to be called upon to consider as the most important business of the session? I submit it is not treating parliament fairly not to have these agreements before us. It is not according to hon. members of this House of Commons the consideration that has been given by other governments of the empire to the representatives of their parliaments who are being called together to discuss this important matter. I drew my right hon. friend's attention last week to the fact that the British parliament does not begin its session until the 18th of this month, that is a week from to-morrow. My right hon. friend says that on Thursday of this week he will table the agreements. What does that mean? It means that the members of the House of Commons of Great Britain, and of the other parliaments of the empire, will have in advance of the time that they begin to consider the agreements, full knowledge of all that the agreements contain, but that the one parliament of the empire which will not possess this knowledge is the parliament of the Dominion of Canada, the country in which the conference itself was held. I say, Mr. Speaker, that some explanation of this circumstance must be given by the Prime Minister and I hope it will be one which will satisfy the public mind. I must say I feel that it is, as matters now stand, little short of an indignity to parliament, that we in this House of Commons should be kept in ignorance on so important a matter as the texts of the agreements and subjected in this particular to a different kind of treatment from that received by members of the other dominion parliaments of the empire and of the British House of Commons.

But there is something more extraordinary than that. My right hon. friend has on the order paper to-day notice of a motion which he told us he intends to move on Wednesday of this week. It reads:

That it is expedient that parliament do approve of the trade agreement entered into at Ottawa the twentieth day of August, 1932, between representatives of His Majesty's government in Canada and of His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom, and that this house do approve of the same, subject to the legislation required in order to give effect to the fiscal changes consequent thereto.

The agreement itself is to be tabled in its entirety on Thursday. That was the statement my right hon. friend also made—

Mr. BENNETT: Wednesday.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Does my right hon. friend propose to deal with the tariff changes as well on Wednesday?

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Mr. BENNETT: I said the Minister of Finance (Mr. Rhodes) would make the necessary motion in that regard.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Would that be made on Wednesday?

Mr. BENNETT: That is the idea, just to make the motion formally, that is all.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: My right hon. friend speaking on Friday last is reported in Hansard as follows:

However, it would seem to meet the convenience of all if on Wednesday next the resolution be moved ratifying the agreement with the United Kingdom, and bills introduced with respect to the other agreements. If the motion were made here about four o'clock in the afternoon the British government would be in a position to release on the thirteenth all the agreements, in their entirety, so that they may be printed in the morning papers of that day.

That is to say, on Wednesday we are to have first, if I understand it aright, a motion to approve of the agreements, and then the agreements are to be tabled. My right hon. friend told us we were to depart from the customary practice of this parliament, of disposing of the debate on the address in the first instance, and that the government would reserve to itself the right to proceed immediately with the consideration of the agreements themselves. Now I wish to say to my right hon. friend with all due respect that I feel this House of Commons is entitled to have the text of the agreements before it in full, not for a few hours, but for at least a few days before we are called upon to debate the far reaching and all important issues involved in or raised by those agreements. I have, as I said to my right hon. friend, every desire to facilitate the work of the session. We on this side will do everything we can to see that he is accommodated in the matter of having business despatched as rapidly as circumstances will justify, but we must have our rights as representatives of the people in this House of Commons respected by the government. Those rights demand a knowledge of what we are expected to discuss.

After all, what my right hon. friend is asking this House of Commons to do is what his government asked the electors of South Huron to do a week ago today. The electors were asked to regard the agreements as the main issue in the by-election campaign; they told them that the verdict of that constituency would be looked upon in Britain and elsewhere as the verdict of Canada upon these empire pacts. The people of South Huron