

*Supply—Formation of Ministry*

the general interests of the empire, and to see that any legislation which may touch these or affect international relations, is reserved for the consideration of the central government.

Mr. SPEAKER: May I interrupt the right hon. gentleman? I have followed very closely the debate as it has so far proceeded, and it appears to me that the present trend of the discussion is rather beside the issue which is before the House. The proceedings were subjected to what is described by the authorities as an incidental interruption. The hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Lapointe) raised a question of privilege which I am bound to say, in the language of Bourinot, affects the House collectively. The point of the hon. member's contention is that the hon. gentlemen at present acting as ministers of various departments are encroaching upon

5 p.m. the privileges of parliament inasmuch as they have taken the oath as ministers and should go before the people. That, I gather, is his point, and the hon. member argues that according to the act on the independence of parliament the acting ministers are consequently debarred from conducting the affairs of the government in the House until elected.

Many hon. members have discussed the question pro and con, and if I have followed the remarks of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King) I am afraid they are somewhat irrelevant to the point taken by the hon. member for Quebec East. The question of privilege having been stated, and answer having been made by hon. gentlemen concerned, it seems to me that the House should come to some conclusion in the matter. I have not the slightest desire to minimize the importance of the question raised by the hon. member for Quebec East, but I would remind the House that, as Bourinot points out, every question under consideration must sooner or later take a concrete form, and must be determined. Such determination of the question may be achieved by means of a resolution moved in accordance with the rules of procedure. An hon. member may, of course, at any stage of the proceedings, raise a question of privilege, but the House must come to some conclusion upon it. It would seem hardly desirable to debate a question of privilege at interminable length, once it has been clearly stated. I suggest that, to this end, a motion be moved.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): May I ask Your Honour a question? In view of the fact that as Your Honour has admitted this ques-

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

tion affects every individual member of the House, should any hon. member be denied the right to state the case from his own point of view?

Mr. SPEAKER: Undoubtedly the question raised in this instance affects the House collectively, but it seems to me that a motion should be moved to determine the sense of the House in the circumstances.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I submit that if the representatives of the two larger parties in the House are to be given a reasonable opportunity of discussing this question of privilege affecting the whole House no hon. gentleman ought to be precluded from stating his case. Any member, indeed, if necessary, every member should have a chance to speak to the question.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hasten to assure the House that I have not suggested that any hon. gentleman should be denied the right to discuss the question of privilege as raised by the hon. member for Quebec East, but when I interrupted the leader of the opposition it appeared to me, if I followed him, that he was discussing a totally different subject.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I submit, Mr. Speaker, that the question before the House at the moment is the right of hon. gentlemen opposite to be in office and to advise His Excellency. If that question is to be settled at all one must necessarily go to the roots of the situation to discover how hon. gentlemen came to be in office, and I have been endeavouring to show that they are in office by reason of circumstances of such a character as to demand that immediately, through their prime minister, they advise His Excellency that they are there without due authority and without right and should resign forthwith so as to enable His Excellency promptly to regularize the situation. I make that explanation tentatively, Mr. Speaker; I have not yet concluded my remarks.

Mr. LAPOINTE: It would be perfectly in order to move a motion as a result of the discussion of a question of privilege, but I respectfully submit, Mr. Speaker, that no one is bound to do so. Any hon. gentleman who desires to do so may exercise his right to move such a motion to conclude the debate, and while I quite agree that there must be a determination of this debate as of any other, at the same time this is a matter that affects the rights of every single member of the House. Under the circumstances, I submit that every hon. member is entitled to speak.