

*Committee of Supply*

it will resolve itself into committee of supply; another that on a certain day it will resolve itself into committee of ways and means."

Mr. King then said:

Here we have a positive statement of the customary method of procedure. I submit it is custom that governs in matters of this kind. I refer next to Redlich's Procedure of the House of Commons, 1907, volume 3, page 133:

"In response to the speech from the throne the Commons, as soon as they have voted the address in reply, appoint the two great committees before which the whole finance of the year has to be discussed—the committee of supply and the committee of ways and means."

That is very specific language; as soon as they have voted the address in reply they appoint the committees. It is, I think, conclusive in its wording and meaning.

There are reasons why this practice should not grow by failure to observe what the precedents have been. It is customary—and I may say that practice will be followed on this occasion by the opposition—to move an amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne which is a motion indicating lack of confidence in the government. That is customary practice, and it will be adhered to. If this procedure were followed, then a similar motion might be made to the motion to go into supply, and you would have two motions of want of confidence before the house at the same time. It is certainly no answer to a question of procedure in this house to say that the government enjoys so large and assured a majority that no question can arise as to the disposition of a motion of that kind. I would hope that no such suggestion will be made. I still have hopes that there may be members who will assert their independence sufficiently to give real meaning to a motion of this kind. But the procedure that we are following may apply to instances in which the numbers in the house are very close, and in which two debates relating to confidence of the house could go on simultaneously.

I would ask any hon. members who are interested in that particular point to examine the words of Mr. King, spoken on that very subject on the occasion to which I have referred. In that same speech Mr. King made a statement which I think is appropriate on this point, and I quote his words:

What I am afraid of is that in this house we may be changing a custom by the exceptions we are making, that the government is not viewing the proposed course so much as an exception as it is seeking to make what has been an exception in the last session or two a custom which will govern in the future.

Then there is a discussion of the importance of the debate on the speech from the throne. There are two great debates each session, namely, the debate on the address in

[Mr. Drew.]

reply to the speech from the throne, and the debate which follows the presentation of the budget. In the debate on the address in reply it is customary for hon. members who have returned from their constituencies to interpret, at the time the session opens, what they have found there of major public concern. Any argument that can be put forward in favour of the motion which has been already presented by the Prime Minister, that the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne should have precedence over all other business, unless any other motion is made, supports the contention which I am now making, namely, that there should be no interference with the established practice in dealing with the debate on the address in reply.

What we do now may be a precedent for other occasions. There may be occasions—as there have been in the past—on which government will not receive a vote of confidence from the house. If the government does not receive a vote of confidence, and under our procedure is then called upon to go to the people or to have a new government formed, any debate that has taken place on supply will simply have been wiped out and proved useless. That is one of the reasons why the discussions in committee of supply or in committee of ways and means have been intended by the established practice of this house and of Westminster to be deferred until the debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne has been dealt with.

Having regard to the precedents, and what might happen in the future, and considering the desire to preserve our parliamentary practice, I submit, Mr. Speaker, that this motion should not be proceeded with now. We know it cannot be dealt with now without consent. So that there may be no question of that, for the very reasons I have given I cannot accord consent to this motion today. But I do not believe the motion should be proceeded with in any event, on notice or otherwise, until the debate on the address in reply has been concluded.

**Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggarr):** I agree with what the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) has said. If anyone looks through the records of the House of Commons over the past fifteen years during, to a very large extent, the prime ministership of Mr. King, he will find that the views which have just been quoted by the leader of the opposition were expressed by Mr. King not only when he was himself in opposition but when he was prime minister and head of the government.

I would also point out in support of the leader of the opposition that, while the two