

Government's Right to Office

A message was delivered by Major A. R. Thompson, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, as follows:

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly the House went up to the Senate chamber.

Then the Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, Speaker-elect, said:

May it please Your Excellency,

The House of Commons have elected me as their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfil the important duties thus assigned to me. If in the performance of those duties I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me, and not to the Commons whose servant I am.

The Honourable the Speaker of the Senate, addressing the Honourable the Speaker of the House, then said:

Mr. Speaker, I am commanded by His Excellency the Governor General to assure you that your words and actions will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

Then His Excellency the Governor General was pleased to open parliament by a Speech from the Throne.

And the House being returned to the Commons chamber:

Mr. SPEAKER: I have the honour to state that the House having attended on His Excellency the Governor General in the Senate chamber, I informed His Excellency that the choice of Speaker had fallen upon me, and, in your names and on your behalf, I made the usual claim for your privileges, which His Excellency was pleased to confirm to you.

GOVERNMENT'S RIGHT TO RETAIN OFFICE

Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Leader of the House): The House is now properly organized, and in view of the peculiar circumstances under which this parliament is meeting, which have necessitated this early summoning of hon. members, the government thinks it its duty, as the first act of government in this parliament, to submit the following motion, which I make, seconded by the Hon. Mr. Macdonald (Minister of National Defence):

That in the opinion of this House, in view of the recent general election, the government was justified in retaining office and in summoning parliament, and the government is entitled to retain office, unless defeated by a vote of this House equivalent to a vote of want of confidence.

I quite realize that this motion will involve some discussion and I am prepared to discuss it to-day; but, on the other hand, I should not like anybody to be taken by surprise, and if it is the wish of the House that the

[Mr. Speaker.]

consideration of this motion should be postponed till Monday I am quite content to agree, provided the motion is disposed of before we take up any other business.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the manner in which a group of men who claim to constitute the government has opened this House is quite on a parity with the conduct of the same group since its defeat in the last election. May I say, first of all, that I do not rise to ask any grace from that group of men? I am not proposing to ask for any adjournment of anything. I take the ground, though, first of all, that this motion without notice is out of order.

Mr. FORKE: I might suggest that we do not know what it is about.

Mr. MEIGHEN: It is not about very much. It is in the form of the usual motion of which notice must be given and this alleged government has no right, whatever autocratic sentiments its members may recently have imbibed, to proceed in this House without notice. To suggest that they may do so is in itself a discourtesy to parliament, is in itself a contempt of parliament. When I say that we on this side received no notice of the government's intention, I make a statement that I am sure will occasion no surprise. I am as sure that no hon. member who is not within the fold of the government had any notice of it. Not only had we on this side no notice, but at the opening of the House this afternoon I was provided with an order of proceedings for the day upon which this notice does not appear—in which no reference whatever is made to any intention of the government to make such a motion. We are, in effect, notified that no such procedure as this will be attempted by the so-called administration, and after we have been so notified, he who now assumes to lead or does lead the assumed ministry, comes before this House and ventures to suggest to us that a motion of this kind is in order. It is wholly unprecedented. Certainly the circumstances are unprecedented. The reason for the unprecedented circumstances we all see right opposite us now. But the fact that such circumstances are created by the administration gives the administration no right to do an unprecedented act in this House. I therefore, first of all, rising to a point of order, take the ground that the government has no right to proceed.

Mr. LAPOINTE: I will not make any comment on the tone of asserted superiority