

*Reinforcements*

Mr. BLACKMORE: Then there would be no way in which the members of the house could obtain that information except through a secret session. Is that right?

Mr. HOMUTH: What about the public of Canada?

Mr. BLACKMORE: I am asking a question.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I would say this: In the British parliament they have had something like 120 secret sessions during this war. These secret sessions were held in order that hon. members of the House of Commons at Westminster might get information which was of importance to them, but which could not be imparted to them in public. They have not thought in Britain, which is the home of freedom if there ever was a home of freedom, that the public were being denied something they were entitled to possess, because their representatives in parliament were being given very secret information which would help them and help the country at a time of war. There is nothing that I can see that is inimical in a secret session. I am not going to demand a secret session, but I will as leader of this house, if a large proportion of hon. members of the house wish anything of the kind, not impede them. I would leave it to the house to say whether or not we should have a secret session.

Mr. GRAYDON: Did the Prime Minister say that it was the intention of the government to sit only in the afternoon to-morrow?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: What I said was this, that having the responsibility that I have had and have at the present time, if after sitting up after midnight to-night and for a good many nights I feel that to-morrow I should not make a statement in this house which would begin a most important debate, a debate which will determine whether this government is to continue in office or be replaced by another, I would not wish to start that debate to-morrow afternoon. I may feel very differently in the morning. I may decide it is not necessary to say more than a few words; but if my hon. friend insists on my proceeding when the house meets, with opening the debate, and I feel that I cannot do justice to the government or to myself and to the responsibility I have, I will ask the house to allow me to adjourn the debate until the following week. What I would suggest as an alternative and what I think would be preferable in every way would be that General McNaughton's examination or questioning might be continued to-morrow afternoon in open session, because some have not received

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

all the desired information, and if the members wish to have a period of secret session then a part of to-morrow could be taken up in a secret session and we could adjourn at six o'clock and begin the debate on Monday.

Mr. GRAYDON: That is such a reasonable suggestion I do not think anybody would want to object to it. We are anxious that this should not be turned into a lengthy debate and that General McNaughton not be kept here for any great length of time. The Prime Minister will understand that. I think there can be no objection to the suggestion except that the Prime Minister had better be on the lookout for another suggestion with respect to secret sessions because I am afraid it will be opposed strenuously over here.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: That is all right. It is understood that to-morrow we shall continue with General McNaughton's answers to further questions. He will be ready to make further answers. If the house decides to do so, some information may be given in a secret session but in any event we shall sit only until six o'clock.

Mr. GRAYDON: It is definitely understood that the debate with respect to the motion the Prime Minister has on the *Votes and Proceedings* will go on at three o'clock on Monday regardless of what happens to-morrow.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: On Monday, yes. May I thank my hon. friend for his accommodation.

May I, before we close, clear up one point about correspondence that was raised. I have asked the Clerk with reference to what the hon. member for York South (Mr. Noseworthy) said as to his having tabled a communication and of its having been sent back to him the next day by the Clerk. I asked the Clerk as to the circumstances, and he has given me the following statement which I think will be of interest to all hon. members:

The well-known rule is that when a private member quotes a private letter dealing with a public matter he is bound to lay it on the table; and when debate is over the clerk returns the letter because it is not a parliamentary paper.

The Clerk informs me that he returned the hon. member's letter because the debate was finished. He has also directed my attention to Bourinot's Parliamentary Procedure which has the following paragraph at page 245:

Papers are frequently referred to in debate which the rules of debate require should be laid on the table or which a minister of the crown or some member of the house desires should be