

Mr. BENNETT: I will not stand in the way.

Mr. KENNEDY: Shall we continue with this estimate of the Post Office department?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Then if the house is agreeable, I would suggest that we meet at 7.30.

Mr. GARDINER: We are quite willing to come back at 7.30 provided it is understood that private bills will stand, and that we shall go on with supply.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: That will be the understanding.

At six o'clock the house took recess.

After Recess

The house resumed at seven thirty o'clock.

PRIVATE BILLS

On the order:

Resuming the debate on the proposed motion of Mr. Denis (Joliette) for the second reading of Bill No. 152 an act respecting the Great Lakes and Atlantic Canal and Power Company Limited.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Stand.

Order stands.

On the order:

Resuming the debate on the proposed motion of Sir Eugene Fiset for the third reading of Bill No. 56, an act respecting the Sun Life Assurance of Canada, and the proposed motion of Mr. Ladner "That this question be now put."

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Stand.

Order stands.

On the order:

Resuming the debate on the motion of Mr. Taylor for the third reading of Bill No. 58, an act to incorporate the London and Port Burwell Railway Company, and on the proposed amendment thereto of Mr. Church.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Stand.

Order stands.

On the order:

Resuming the debate on the proposed motion of Mr. Edwards (Ottawa) for the third reading of Bill No. 43, an act respecting the Bell Telephone Company of Canada, and on the proposed amendment thereto of Mr. Sanderson.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Stand.

Order stands.

PRIVATE BILL LEGISLATION—RULES AND PROCEDURE

Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, before we leave private bills I desire to say I cannot but think that matters so vitally affecting the business

life of Canada as some of these bills do should not be dealt with as they have been by this House of Commons. I have a very strong conviction about this matter, but I have not expressed myself before with respect to it. I do not think it is conducive to public appreciation or respect for parliamentary institutions that what took place this afternoon should recur, that a small group, because they say they will talk a bill out, should be able thus to prevent a vote being taken upon the merits of the measure.

I do not propose in any sense to express an opinion with regard to the bills, but I do say we must in some way amend our rules or modify our procedure to prevent that situation recurring. It is bad for the country, it is bad for parliament, and it is worse for the commercial community whose interests may be affected. I have not a word to say in criticism of those who do not approve of measures and desire to discuss them, but a minority of twenty or twenty-five should never be able to prevent a vote being taken and the will of the house recorded. If this house is in favour of the legislation it should have the opportunity to so declare; if the house disapproves, there should be an opportunity afforded to so record itself.

I venture to make these observations at the end of this session because I have not heretofore said anything with respect to the matter. I do hope we may be able to arrive at some method by which a recurrence of the situation may be prevented. I realize that initially the trouble was in terminating private members' days too speedily; but that was the fault of the house itself, and in no sense was the administration to blame. But I do think that if my friend the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) had determined that we should have the power to vote, there never was a case in which the powers of closure would have been more salutary, nor the invitation to use them would have been more properly acted on than in these cases.

Right. Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING: (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I cannot agree with my hon. friend that closure should have been introduced with respect to private legislation, but I heartily agree for the most part with his other remarks. I may say that the government as a whole are entirely of his view that there may be a necessity to amend the rules so as at least to enable the promoters of private bills to have them determined one way or the other by this parliament.