

## Committee of Supply

**Mr. George A. Drew (Leader of the Opposition):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate that this motion should be examined and the effect of its presentation at this time carefully considered.

Already this afternoon it has been pointed out that what is done now without objection may become a precedent. Practice becomes established simply by repetition. This same type of motion, in somewhat similar form, was introduced at the beginning of the session which opened last September. When the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) introduced the motion at that time he explained that he was doing so because it was necessary, in order to prevent any disturbance of the public service, to ask then for additional supply. No similar reason exists on this occasion. Because of the fact that supply had run for some time without the ordinary procedure being followed, we did not raise objection to the adoption of such a motion on that occasion. Today there is no reason for the presentation of this motion, and there are many strong reasons against it.

If this were merely a case of dealing with a motion as one which requires consent, then I would not be making the objection I now propose to make. If the question were simply whether we deal with this motion today without notice or deal with it a few days from now with notice, I should not be inclined to press the point strongly, because we all know what the purpose is. No one can suggest that there is any measure of surprise involved in the motion itself. Any point that I now make applies, I submit, with the same force to this motion, as if it were coming forward after due notice had been given.

I think it will be recognized by every member that in any event this motion cannot be dealt with today unless there is unanimous consent. But I think it is appropriate that we should deal now with the principle involved, so that discussion of this same subject on a second occasion may be avoided; the procedure will then be more convenient to the government as well as to members of the house generally.

This motion is made under standing order 57, which reads as follows:

The house shall appoint the committees of supply and ways and means at the commencement of every session, so soon as an address has been agreed to, in answer to His Excellency's speech.

I know it has been contended on other occasions in this house that the words "at the commencement of every session, so soon as an address has been agreed to" are not intended to prevent the appointment of these committees by motion before the address has been agreed to, but that they are a direction that

the committees must be proceeded with when that address has been agreed to. I submit, however, that this is not the interpretation which should be taken of the wording of that rule. Since it seems desirable that we be in no doubt as to what the meaning of the rule is, I should like to read what I believe to be one of the clearest arguments I have read in the records of this house in support of the proposition that this rule means that the committees must not and cannot be appointed until after the address has been dealt with.

I will quote from an extended speech made by Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King in this house on February 6, 1934. I am reading from page 287 of *Hansard*; I shall cover only a limited part of his remarks. I start to quote from the point at which he was dealing with the interpretation which should be placed on this section:

It is obvious, from the reading of the rule of this house, that it is copied *literatim et verbatim* from the rule of the House of Commons at Westminster. There are two words which appear in the order at Westminster that do not appear in our order, the words "in future," but they in no way affect its purpose. The order of the British house is standing order No. 14; it reads as follows:

"This house will, in future, appoint the committees of supply and ways and means at the commencement of every session, so soon as an address has been agreed to, in answer to His Majesty's speech."

Then Mr. King's words continue:

The interpretation to be placed upon the order by the British house is best given by the leading constitutional authorities on procedure in the Commons, and on the law and custom of the constitution. I shall therefore quote from three or four of the most eminent authorities. It will be apparent, once the quotations are given, that there is no longer room for doubt as to what the intention of the order is.

May's Parliamentary Practice at page 520 of the thirteenth edition, published in 1924, has the following:

"The action taken by the House of Commons upon the demand of aid and supply for the public service made by the speech from the throne is the appointment, pursuant to standing order No. 14, of those committees of the whole house which are known as the committee of supply and the committee of ways and means. Motions setting up these committees are made immediately after the house agrees to the address in answer to the speech from the throne, and are put forthwith from the chair, no debate being permitted thereon."

Mr. King continued:

Hon. members will observe that the wording is not that they "may be" or "must be" established, but that they "are" established immediately after the house agrees to the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

Anson's Law of the Constitution, volume I, fifth edition, 1922, page 286, states:

"The speech from the throne always contains a demand from the crown for supply, and as soon as the House of Commons has agreed upon an address in reply to the speech, it has for many years passed two resolutions—one that on a certain day