

standing up, as we thought, for the great and inestimable privilege of parliament, the right of free speech, seemed to menace and which I thought menaced the liberties and rights of the members of this House. When the hon. member for Kent was in the Chair my right hon. friend the Prime Minister made the statement in effect that the discussion had gone far enough. What took place then? Did the hon. member for Kent bring his judgment to bear with regard to the discussion being marked by tedious repetition or not? Did he seek to bring into force the rule of this House which enables the Chairman to call the attention of an hon. member to the fact that he is guilty of tedious repetition, or that he is speaking in a manner irrelevant to the question under discussion? Not at all. Immediately, as if he understood perfectly what the right hon. the Prime Minister requested, and what he was desirous he should do, he turned his back upon hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, and proceeded to put the question to the committee. Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to go back to the days when you were in opposition, and I ask, what would you have done in those circumstances? As one who loves British fair play, as one who has stood with the minority in this House for the rights of the people whom you and they represented, I ask you, would you have remained in your seat silently, and seen the rights of the minority in this House so ruthlessly trampled upon without making a protest? What could we do, Sir? We knew that the Chairman at the behest of the right hon. the Prime Minister was deliberately violating the rules of this House.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to remind the hon. member, who is an old parliamentarian, that it is not permissible to impute improper motives to an hon. member of this House. I think he will agree with me that there is no rule better understood than that.

Mr. PUGSLEY: I do not want to impute motives; I do not impute motives. But, Mr. Speaker, I believed then, and I believe now, that the Chairman's action was not accidental. I believe he acted intentionally. I believe he acted in consequence of the suggestion of the right hon. the Prime Minister, made openly. I do not use the expression in an offensive sense at all; I am stating facts which everybody on the floor of this House is aware of. It is absolutely correct, and it would be a pretense if I were to try to use other language. I repeat, I do not impute any motives. The Chairman was a young man, unacquainted with parliamentary rules, and perhaps he thought he was bound by the request of the

Prime Minister as the leader of the Government and the leader of the House. But he deliberately turned his back on this side of the House, and refused to hear further discussion when the hon. member for Humboldt (Mr. Neely) was on his feet. Now, in my judgment the rules of this House give to every hon. member the right to speak upon any question which is under discussion. When you, Sir, are in the Chair, a member can speak only once; but under the rules of the House, and under the rules of the British House of Commons, as they existed on the first day of July, 1867, it is the right of every member to speak as often as he likes upon any question which is under discussion in committee. The only right under the rules which the Chairman has to stop him is to call his attention to the fact that he is guilty of tedious repetition, that he is speaking in a manner irrelevant to the debate, that he is repeating either his own arguments or the arguments of others. That is the rule, and the only rule which the Chairman has a right to invoke. He did not invoke it. Notwithstanding the fact that the hon. member for Humboldt was, as I remember, speaking for the first time on this question, a question of great importance, the Chairman, in violation, as I thought, of the rules of this House, which as I have said give to every hon. member the right of speech upon any question which comes up, and upon the suggestion of the Prime Minister, turned his back upon members upon this side of the House, refused to hear the hon. member for Humboldt and proceeded to put the question.

Now, what were we to do? Were we to sit silent and see the rules of this Parliament trampled upon in the manner in which it was proposed to trample upon them? We are here to-day not fighting for ourselves. If it were only for ourselves, it would be a small matter, but we are fighting for the people of this country, we are fighting for those who, in years to come, will be represented on the floor of this Parliament and I know of no country in which it is more important that the people should always feel that the minority have the right of free speech, have the fullest liberty of speech and that they have at least an opportunity of presenting their views. Canada is composed of different races. One race is in the majority, others are in the minority and free speech is a great safety valve. The moment you tell the people that the majority can trample upon the rules of Parliament, close the mouths of the members of this House and prevent them from expressing their views, that day you strike a blow against parliamentary institutions from which it would take many, many years to recover.