

best possible advantage. It is provided—because I presume it was anticipated that hon. gentlemen opposite would say, why, on the last day you have us right in your grip; you can put up some hon. member on the Government side and he can go on and discuss the Bill until two o'clock, it is not provided in this clause that no hon. member shall speak longer than twenty minutes, and that their will be no reasonable possibility, unless the Speaker becomes a conspirator with the Government, of refusing discussion on the last day.

Mr. GERMAN: You may not give us longer than twenty minutes to speak. You can quite easily do that.

Mr. MEIGHEN: He is satisfied with the last and he returns to the first objection that the Government might obstruct itself on one clause until one o'clock in order that it might not be obstructed on another until two o'clock. I do not think that the hon. gentleman seriously anticipates that any such thing could or would be done by a sane government. However you put it, even assuming the worst that you can assume against the Government, there is certainly a latitude allowed beyond what is allowed in the Old Land.

So then, there is not the least ambiguity about it. The hon. member specially designated by the Government to show those resolutions under the most favourable light, is forced to admit that the full exercise of the powers conferred by clause 3 leads to the worst of tyrannies in connection with parliamentary institution: That which consists in preventing the Opposition from discussing the acts of the Government. The only corrective which that honourable gentleman can suggest to that despotic principle, is that no Government will dare make use of it; but all the same it is within its powers to enforce it, and that alone is a dire prospect.

Let us take our present ministers. What will become of the rights and privileges of the Opposition when they are left at their discretion? On April 9 they gave us a dramatic illustration of their idea of good faith and fair play as regards opponents in the minority, and we are justified in expecting to be the victims of all sorts of grievances as soon as they are the only masters, the supreme arbiters of freedom of speech and discussion. But even supposing them to be better than they appear to be, and with the best intentions, I still maintain that under no consideration should we abandon the exercise of such power to the will of a minister of the Crown however straightforward, honest and enlightened. A minister of the Crown is a political partizan; a knowledge of the past, as well as of the present, shows to what injustices, to what abuses, to what moral vagaries, partizanship may lead at times. That is why, from the very beginning of humanity, governments of all kinds and of every age have been obliged to legislate to enforce the observance of certain rules of justice between individuals and now, in this nine-

teenth century and in this free parliament of a free Canada, it is proposed to-day to clothe a successful politician with unbounded and unlimited powers, powers of which even an angel could not but abuse. I say that such a departure is scandalous, immoral, tyrannical, and it is one of those cases when a member of Parliament or a citizen is justified in crying out: 'Non serviam', when a citizen or a member of Parliament is justified in resisting by all means the action and control of the government.

And what shall we say now of clause 4? That is something worse than the gag. It is strangling pure and simple. In the first place, let us look into the interpretation of that clause, always according to the honourable member for Portage la Prairie. I quote herewith his answer to some questions put by the honourable member for Bonaventure (Mr. Marcil):

Mr. MARCIL: Does the same rule apply to a discussion of the estimates? As the rule now stands, the estimates are taken up one after the other. Would it be possible for a minister of the Crown to give notice that on a certain day the whole estimates of one department or of all the departments might be called automatically or put to the House.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Referring to the first part of the hon. gentleman's remarks, consideration of the estimates in analogous consideration of clauses in a committee. In the estimates, resolutions are substituted for clauses. Consequently in clause 3, the term 'resolution' and the term 'clause' are both used. The Government could take the same course with regard to a resolution as with regard to a clause; that is, after it has been discussed for a length of time—and I earnestly hope the Government will allow more than fifteen minutes to a discussion of \$200,000 of salary, which was the limit left by the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Carvell) when he was on the Government side—after a resolution for a vote of a certain amount, say a salary, has been discussed for a certain time, the Government can move the adjournment of the discussion and can pass to another item. After it has been discussed for a certain time the Government can take the responsibility again if conditions develop to warrant such action, and move the adjournment, and so on. The Government can move three, four or more, and then, having moved those, can give notice that on a subsequent day those that have already been discussed be discussed on that day but that the discussion stop before two o'clock.

So then, this clause, in theory and in practice does away entirely with all the means of attack and defence of which the Opposition disposes in regard to governmental acts; then this Government may besides have recourse to clause 3 whenever a minister is anxious to prevent the consideration of any item of supply or of the estimates. It is the ruin of the primary and most essential right and privilege of the people, that of ventilating and obtain-