

*Procedure and Organization*

Macdonald and my hon. friend from Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), the great expert in this house on Sir John A., agrees with me—flying around? One of them is now off promoting separatism in the province of Quebec. I do not suppose many of us thought highly of his opinions. Probably few of us found very much sense in those opinions. But certainly the Speaker of the last parliament, and the members of that parliament, gave Mr. Grégoire every right to express his opinions. In that respect he enjoyed a greater advantage than those who stayed within the recognized political parties in this house. Continuing with this brilliant chapter by Mr. Mill on the liberty of thought and discussion, he makes these points:

All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility. Its condemnation may be allowed to rest on this common argument, not the worse for being common.

That is a key point to remember when dealing with the Prime Minister, the government house leader and the people promoting this iniquitous doctrine. They and they alone are the great repositories of truth. The rest of us in this chamber just go along for the philosophic ride.

I should like to put some more quotations from John Stuart Mill on the record which may awaken memories of times before these Liberals came to Ottawa to become part of some great sausage making complex:

But I must be permitted to observe, that it is not the feeling sure of a doctrine (be it what it may) which I call an assumption of infallibility. It is the undertaking to decide that question for others, without allowing them to hear what can be said on the contrary side. And I denounce and reprobate this pretension not the less, if put forth on the side of my most solemn convictions.

This whole volume is well worth reading and I commend it to my Liberal friends, because sooner or later as this debate goes on they will have to examine their consciences. Our freedoms will in large measure be determined by the stand they take in caucus. We do not expect miracles of them or that they will bolt the party line, but perhaps they will force an early caucus tomorrow and ask themselves whether they are Liberals at heart, whether their ancestor Liberals always fought for freedom of discussion rather than the choking and gagging of the opinions of others. Perhaps the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants, they will say, did have a point to make when he read what John Stuart Mill had to say on liberty of thought and discussion.

[Mr. McCleave.]

• (9:40 p.m.)

Let me put on record some more thoughts for them to take to their caucus. John Stuart Mill continues:

We have now recognized the necessity to the mental well-being of mankind (on which all their other well-being depends) of freedom of opinion, and freedom of the expression of opinion, on four distinct grounds; which we will now briefly recapitulate.

First, if any opinion is compelled to silence, that opinion may, for aught we can certainly know, be true. To deny this is to assume our own infallibility.

Secondly, though the silenced opinion be an error, it may, and very commonly does, contain a portion of truth; and since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinions that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied.

Thirdly, even if the received opinion be not only true, but the whole truth; unless it is suffered to be, and actually is, vigorously and earnestly contested,—

Is that not what debate is all about, the vigorous and earnest contestation of ideas?

—it will, by most of those who receive it, be held in the manner of a prejudice, with little comprehension of feeling of its rational grounds. And not only this, but, fourthly, the meaning of the doctrine itself will be in danger of being lost, or enfeebled, and deprived of its vital effect on the character and conduct; the dogma becoming a mere formal profession, inefficacious for good, but cumbering the ground, and preventing the growth of any real and heartfelt conviction, from reason or personal experience.

Those are the words of a great Englishman. But even though he was a Liberal member of parliament the Prime Minister does not heed his doctrine.

Where have abuses crept into parliament during the 12 years I have been here? The latest alleged abuse arises from the debate on the Criminal Code amendments, when our friends to the far left put up a battle over the modernization of the law dealing with abortion. I did not share their opinions. Neither did I share the government's formula. But I will certainly defend their right to get what they had to say off their chests. Perhaps the argument was repetitious and overly long, but at least their constituents can now say that the measure that passed is the law, and that it was well and truly considered in parliament. The issue was fought until it could be fought no more. Every argument that could be adduced was put forward in this chamber.

Then, there was the flag debate. I was not here at that time but I would have joined my colleagues and doubtless spoken at some length. The house was then dealing with an