

this House, even though its legislation may be of a character that some of its own supporters cannot approve. This is not for the present only, nor does it affect us alone. I may not be long in public life and I can stand it, and so can other hon. members of this House; but you are laying a foundation for future action; you are saying to the men you are bringing here from the four corners of the earth: We, in Canada, are afraid of free speech; we in Parliament feel bound to gag the minority, and are even afraid ourselves to make an amendment to a proposition we bring before the House. We are afraid to trust ourselves; we gag ourselves so that we cannot make an amendment! The Minister of Customs himself could not make an amendment to these rules, even if he thought it were necessary; the Prime Minister himself could not change one word of the proposed amendment of the rules. No member of the Government, no matter how seriously he may desire to do so, or how deeply he feels that these rules would operate against the freedom of the people, can possibly, under this generous and high-minded resolution, move an amendment. The only course open to hon. gentlemen is to withdraw the measure and introduce a new one; I would ask the right hon. Prime Minister to do this, and give his supporters an opportunity to move any amendments deemed by them to be desirable. I am sure the people are not satisfied with this procedure, and the time will come when hon. gentlemen opposite will rue the day that they tied this chain and ball to their own feet in respect of the discussion of public questions in the House of Commons of this Dominion. Free speech in the Dominion of Canada has never produced anything but what the majority of the people have considered to be a great benefit; it would produce nothing else in this case. It is open to the Government to act constitutionally in the matter, and to take a course which would be approved by the people. The Naval Bill has not been pronounced upon by the Canadian electorate. It was mentioned in two or three border constituencies in the province of Ontario, and the people here subscribed to the policy of the ex-Minister of Public Works (Mr. Monk) that there should be no contribution without a referendum. In Quebec, if there was any result; if this naval question were an issue—and it was—the people pronounced in favour of a Canadian navy; few constituencies, if any, expressed themselves as being in favour of a contribution or of Imperial federation. In the other provinces the naval question was not an issue. I have observed from a recent report that the ex-Minister of Public Works, the leader of the Nationalist party in the province of Quebec, has

pronounced himself against closure, but, leaving that aside, the naval question was not an issue. Every member on the Government side who was in the House—nearly every member of the Government—voted at one time that either a contribution to Imperial armaments or the creation of a Canadian navy would cause a change in the relationships between the Mother Country and the overseas Dominion. That being the case, is any other argument needed to support the contention that this question should be submitted to the people of Canada? If such a matter were to come up in Great Britain, the people would surely be asked to pronounce upon it. In Canada we pretend to be following in the footsteps of Great Britain in the matter of closure, but the Government of the day are not doing so when they refuse to consult the people in respect of a question of such vast importance. I ask hon. gentlemen what they are afraid of? Will some hon. gentleman opposite not tell me why it would not be fair to all concerned that an appeal should be made to the people in regard to this matter? If the people then say they are in favour of this contribution, and if the Opposition, in the face of that mandate, would dare to obstruct, the Government would be entitled to pass a fair measure of closure to see that the will of the people was carried out. But, under the present circumstances, in the midst of a heated debate, it is highly improper to introduce these ill considered rules, to prevent the leader of the Opposition, who is probably better acquainted with the rules of the House than any other hon. gentleman in this House, from giving his opinion as to what these rules ought to be. By reason of their procedure in this regard, hon. gentlemen opposite have prevented the right hon. leader of the Opposition, who, by his long experience and active participation in the leading debates which have taken place in this Parliament during the last forty years, is an authority on all such matters, from offering any suggestions or amendments. What will the people of Great Britain think of a parliament which proceeds to change its rules, and to deprive one who has been recognized for years as the most prominent man in Canadian public life of the right to say one word as to the construction of these proposed rules? What will they say when they realize that an hon. gentleman sitting to your left, Mr. Speaker, who was for some years the honoured Speaker of this House, was also debarred from making any suggestions as to the form of the proposed amendment of the rules? What will the people of Great Britain think when they know that you, the Speaker of this House, have been set to one side, by amateurs who have been in