

*Canadian Flag*

A few sentences later he said:

It has been charged against us that we have delayed the business of the house, that we have prevented it from going on.

That has not been charged here because the matter has been cleared away by the Prime Minister's frank statement which I quoted earlier.

Sir, I deny the charge altogether; there is not a word of foundation for it. If the business of the house is not more advanced than it is, the fault cannot be laid at our door, but at the door of the other side.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the state of affairs today. Indeed, when the Prime Minister gets out on the stump on some of these trips of discovery, he speaks of the wonderful record of this government and of how much legislation it has got through. That is when he is outside the house. Sir Wilfrid went on:

It is quite true that when we came to the first of April, supply had not been voted, and the financial year was at an end; but if supply had not been voted before that, whose fault was it? Was it that supply was demanded and was refused?

Then as reported at column 7433 Sir Wilfrid went on to say this:

Everybody knows that whenever a measure of public importance was brought to our attention we gave it our best consideration, and it was passed.

That is our position today, Mr. Speaker. Every piece of legislation this government has introduced and carried along has been passed. Indeed, we have been so anxious to get the government to produce the legislation it has not got that we have supported the adjournment of the house so the government might bring these measures forward. Then Sir Wilfrid Laurier continued:

It is true, sir, that we opposed a certain measure. It is true that we opposed the bill for naval aid. We did that with all the might at our command; we did it with all the means at our command under the rules of the house. Am I to be told that in the exercise of this power of strenuous opposition we did anything which is not in accordance with the best traditions of parliamentary government?

Mr. Speaker, his words of 1913 come back to us today and can be applied to the present circumstances. He continued:

Sir, at all times in this house, at all times in the mother of parliaments, there have been questions upon which the minority thought it owed it to itself to offer the most vigorous opposition possible. Under the rules of the house it is expected that the two sides of the house shall carry on the business, as was stated by my right hon. friend today, and so it is generally; but there are occasions, I repeat, when the opposition or a minority owes it to itself, on account of the strong views it holds upon some public measure,

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

to oppose that measure with all the force at its command.

What we have done is to carry out the concepts of parliament espoused by a great parliamentarian. Then Sir Wilfrid continued and said that the remedy is not closure, that it is not the application of brute force. He said the remedy is an appeal to the people. He continued, as reported at column 7435 of *Hansard*:

The people, after all, are the judge and the jury. The people, after all, are the parties to pass judgment as between the government and the opposition—

Then he said:

I am sure it was not a pleasant task that my right hon. friend performed today; and, for my part, when I compare my conduct with his conduct, I am proud that I resisted all applications for closure, and that when the time came I appealed to the people, as I did on reciprocity.

Then as reported at columns 7435 to 7437 he uttered some words which are very significant. He set out the number of times when closure had been applied when there had been obstruction. Then he said that in every case the opposition was right, as it is right today.

The Prime Minister asked me why we did not abolish closure. We had the measure ready for the house but there were other matters to be dealt with. We believed in priorities in matters which deserved immediate attention. A committee on procedure was set up but did not bring in the recommendation in question. At all times we said we would not impose closure and we followed that course, although we did not in fact abolish it as we said we would. Though the legislation was ready, when defeat came to us we could do no other than accept defeat and go to the country.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the right hon. gentleman would not mind my making a purely factual reference. The right hon. gentleman will recall a motion which he brought in to refer the matter to a committee. On that occasion I, speaking on behalf of the official opposition at that time, offered to support the immediate abolition of closure. So the right hon. gentleman could easily have done this that very day without any further debate.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, that interruption is most beneficial. I ask the hon. gentleman now, holding the belief he did with regard to closure, how is he going to vote when there is a motion in this house?