

John made himself the centre of attraction and stepped out into the spot-light as if in an attempt to say to the House: See what a brave boy am I! He admits that a new man was in the Chair; he admits that he was an old parliamentarian; he admits that bedlam prevailed; he admits that the Chairman was doing the best he could to bring about order, and yet he, an old parliamentarian—

Mr. PUGSLEY: I made no such admission. What I said was that, in my judgment, the Chairman was doing everything to bring about disorder, because he was breaking the rules of the House.

Mr. NICKLE: I accept the hon. gentleman's explanation as far as it goes; but he does not say that an old parliamentarian did not leave his seat and come forward in—certainly to those of us who were opposite—a threatening manner.

Mr. PUGSLEY: I positively deny that. I did not come forward in a threatening manner, and I did not give to any reasonable man the slightest indication that I intended to touch the Chairman. All I did was to demand a hearing for the hon. member for Humboldt (Mr. Neely).

Mr. NICKLE: I take this explanation of the hon. gentleman for all it is worth. In this connection I understood him to say: 'I was angry through and through; I rose from my seat and advanced to the centre of the Chamber towards the Chairman.' My hon. friend says he did not do so in a threatening manner; then why did he leave his seat and come towards the Chairman? Was it to prevent the Chairman from giving his ruling? Was it for the purpose of intimidation, or merely to get more, shall I say, notoriety?

Mr. PUGSLEY: The Chairman's deaf ear was turned to this side.

Mr. NICKLE: It is all very well for the hon. gentleman to endeavour to make a farce of this matter; but he has been too long in this House not to know that he should not endeavour to twist what took place on Saturday night into a burlesque. It was one of the most serious occurrences that ever took place in this House, and if it had not been for the tact and judgment of the right hon. leader of this Government, we would have witnessed in this House a scene of which Canada would everlastingly have been ashamed. It is to be regretted by every member of this House that the hon. member for St. John has said that not only did he do this gloriously, but that he would do it again if similar circumstances arose. I trust that there never will be an opportunity for hon. members of this House to witness such a scene as occurred on that memorable Saturday night.

Looking at the question from a constitutional point of view my statements on this occasion are made without careful preparation, although I did look into the question about a week ago. As I understand the rules of this House, the English rules as they stood on the 1st day of July, 1867, have been adopted. A careful perusal of the standing orders of the English House during the year 1867 does not reveal any rule or regulation which would prevent the Speaker, in the case of the House being in disorder, from taking the Chair. If there was no rule of the English House in 1867, and if there is none in this House to-day that prevents the Speaker from taking the Chair when the House or a committee thereof becomes disorderly, then I submit we must go back over the usages and precedents of the English House, upon which the procedure of this House is founded, and be guided by them. In the year 1600 or thereabouts there was a disturbance in the English House on a division, and the Speaker took the Chair and called the House to order; and by referring to the Parliamentary Debates, volume 15, pages 641 and 642, it will be seen that there was another disorder, when the House was in committee and the Speaker took the Chair and called the House to order. I submit, unless we have precedents to the contrary, and in direct opposition to those two precedents, that when the House was in disorder on that Saturday night, you, Mr. Speaker, were entitled to take the Chair, and that you did exactly what you should have done as a responsible officer of this House. You took the Chair, restored the House to order, left the Chair, and the Chairman resumed his position. Your duty is to act as the arbiter of Parliament; we look to you to maintain the dignity of the House, to see that there is freedom of debate and that the rules are observed. If at any time it happens that the House is in disorder, and you, Sir, are not in the Chair, we feel that it is your privilege and your duty again to resume the position of distinction that you occupy, so that the prestige and honour and respect which all houses of parliament feel they owe to their Speaker would at all times bring the House to a sense of its proper position; and this House owes a debt of gratitude to you for having, on the night in question, by your courage and foresight, assumed the responsibility of taking the Chair and having prevented what we all greatly feared would become—

Mr. PUGSLEY: I rise to a point of order. If, Sir, you will not permit any criticism of your conduct, I claim it is out of order to receive praise of your conduct.