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The Introduction of the Closure in the Canadian House of Commons.

On April 9th, the Rt. Hon. R. L. Borden, M. P., introduced in the House of Commons amendments to the rules of the House for the purpose of limiting the freedom of debate and public discussion by a process commonly referred to as "the closure" "the gag" and "the guillotine". Drastic and objectionable as were the proposed amendments, the method by which it was sought to have these measures forced upon the Opposition surpassed for arbitrary and hypocritical procedure, any incident known to the Canadian Parliament. In a speech glittering with professions of fair play, the Prime Minister assured the members of the House that in his mind, and in the purpose of the government, there was no desire to curtail the liberty of speech and the freedom of debate, no intention "to take away from any honourable gentleman on the other side of the House any legitimate right he now possesses".

The Rt. Hon. Mr. Borden's Professions and Practice Compared.

"No one is more ready than I to acknowledge that liberty of speech and freedom of debate must be preserved" was the way in which Mr. Borden began his speech in support of the amendments he was proposing; and "my honourable friends are very suspicious; I think they should be prepared to accept my word in the matter" was the manner in which he sought to remove all doubts as he proceeded. Replying to Sir Wilfrid Laurier's observation on behalf of the Opposition that the amendments meant the "holding a terror" above their heads, Mr. Borden spoke words so fair that it is almost inconceivable they could have been uttered by one who had in his breast at the time the guilty knowledge of the betrayal of these professions which was so quickly to follow. Speaking as the Prime Minister from his seat in Parliament, "Not at all", he said to Sir Wilfrid, "that is not the way in which I would desire to exercise a power of this kind. I would think that if this rule passes, things might go on in future just as they have in the past. I would always ask my right honourable friend what length of time he desired to conclude any particular debate, and I would hope that in future we would be able, as we have been in the past, to come to some conclusion without invoking these rules. I would hope that would be the case. I am not disposed, as I think even my honourable friends on the other side of the House will admit, to use unfairly any power that I might possess. I would think that any reasonable doubt as to the time within which a debate should be concluded ought to be resolved in favour of the minority. I will go so far as to say that the object of bringing these rules into force is not for the purpose of repressing the minority or taking away the right of liberty of speech, but purely for the one overmastering reason, namely, that the parliament of Canada may not become a byword and a reproach, and that it may be able to transact public business".