

Formerly an abstract resolution moved, or a Bill introduced, by a private member was apt to be talked about, and the House by prolonging discussion to the limit of the time available escaped committing itself to a principle on which the minds of many were, as yet, in doubt. Now, after a discussion of several hours, the closure is moved and granted, and if carried the question must be put, and men must vote for or against it or deliberately evade a conclusion by abstaining from the division.

Anson points out another consequence of the closure to which I have not referred—that in many cases men are absolutely compelled by the application of this club to vote either for or against measures which in their opinion have not been fully discussed and on which they are not prepared to give an intelligent vote—they must or else stay outside when the vote is on which a member of Parliament hates most abominably to do. We are told about the rights of the majority. Majorities have rights, up to a certain point. The majority of the people must rule, it is true. But suppose the majority in any locality were to make an enactment that the men who were six feet tall and weighed two hundred pounds could go to their smaller neighbours and take away their property, do you suppose that would be endorsed for a moment? Yet that is what the majority in this House are doing. Their position is in effect: Our side is bigger than yours, there are more of us than there are of you, and we propose to take your rights away. Majorities are confined within certain limits in every legislature in the world. And I say again, in no legislative assembly in the world have rules been introduced in the manner in which these have been introduced restricting the rights of members as these rules propose to restrict them.

Hon. gentlemen opposite have been sitting uneasy under the gag silently but effectively applied to them. Their constituents expected something of them more than silence. They are not silent on the concession lines. They go out there and make speeches and tell what horrible men these Grits are. They come here where the Grits' representatives are assembled and they do not say a word. Not that their courage is gone, but because they have had closure applied to them for weeks. Has not partyism come to a pretty pass, Mr. Speaker, in this Dominion when the sworn representatives of the people can be tied to their seats and prevented from saying a word on behalf of their constituents on great public questions? Put these rules in force and I can tell the hon. member for North Ontario (Mr. Sharpe) that the Finance Minister, if he wished to do so, could have prevented him from making that disturbing speech on the Bank Act.

Mr. GRAHAM.

And let me say for the independent member for South York (Mr. Maclean) that if these rules had been in force many of his speeches on railway questions would never have got on 'Hansard,' for he could be deprived of the opportunity of making them by a little manoeuvring on the part of men who know how to manoeuvre. Do not let hon. gentlemen think that by passing these rules they are going to gag us as they are gagged and that that is going to be an end of it. They are going to be as securely tied up to prevent them from saying anything that the Government does not want them to say as we on this side. This will rob the independent member of his right and will rob the supporter of the Government of his right to be independent. Imagine some hon. gentleman now wishing to make a speech—I do not mean the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Lancaster) for he seldom speaks this session—but some other hon. gentleman who is in the habit of speaking.

Mr. LANCASTER: Does the hon. gentleman think that the member for Lincoln is going to talk for the sake of talking, as he does?

Mr. GRAHAM: I have often thought so.

Mr. LANCASTER: Some live and learn, but others do not.

Mr. GRAHAM: And some have to live a long time in order to learn. But I was only referring to the hon. gentleman as a sample—

Mr. LANCASTER: I am not a fair sample.

Mr. GRAHAM: Let it go at that. The hon. gentleman is an unfair sample, and every member who votes to gag others on this side is an unfair sample of a representative in a British Parliament. Now, I wanted to point out the position in which hon. gentlemen opposite will be under these rules that some of them have not looked at. In parliaments where the majority is greatest the spirit of independence is more likely to break out. And in the future some question is likely to arise as one did in 1896, on which the leading men on the Government side prefer to ally themselves with the Opposition. These rules can prevent such members from placing their sentiments properly before the public even on so great and important a question as one that arouses such differences of opinion. Hon. gentlemen opposite are in the majority now, and everything looks fair to them. They have only been there for a year and a half. But friction and differences may arise. And the Government with a big majority will not hesitate to use the club on members of