

I do not mind; let them do it. But the Canadian people will not forget that because the government could not convince, they decided to throttle parliament by bringing in closure. Let that be perfectly understood.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: In 1917 a measure was brought before the House of Commons to produce a system that did contribute to Canadian disunity. I refer to the conscription measure. It was brought before the house and in the course of the arguments against it Right Hon. Ernest Lapointe said this:

I contend that this house has neither the mandate nor the authority to pass such a measure. Now, this action on the part of the government becomes even more arbitrary when it is accompanied by the rigorous application of the rules of this house which are actually imposed upon us. It is assuredly tyrannical—I believe the word is still within the limits of moderation—to employ the gag in order to have such a measure passed by a parliament such as we constitute just now.

Mention was made of Sir Robert Borden. I am going to quote some of the statements that were made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in this connection. In 1911 and 1912 there were great debates in this chamber. They talk about our debating for 22 days in connection with the flag.

Mr. Grégoire: Thirty two.

Mr. Diefenbaker: As I said yesterday, the Prime Minister made it very clear in a speech in Hamilton that there had been no interference with the legislative program because, after all, all that had been sacrificed were the holidays of members. Sir, let me now place before you what Sir Wilfrid Laurier said.

Mr. Grégoire: Dispense.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: He was dealing with a question that has now been suggested by the Prime Minister. For weeks the debate went on in 1911 on the question of reciprocity. The minister of finance of the Liberal party and Mr. Patterson—I forget what portfolio he held—returned from Washington with what was to be a treaty between Canada and the United States. The Conservative party opposed that, and week after week the argument went on. I have read the press of that time, and the press said there was obstruction because the Conservative party went on and on in that regard. Finally Sir Wilfrid Laurier dissolved the house and his government went down to defeat.

In 1912 the Conservative party brought in legislation in connection with assistance to

the British government for naval construction, a measure that would not be acceptable today and was greatly divisive at that time. The Liberal party opposed it; they stood firmly. I do not know how many weeks the debate went on, but it was a lengthy one. I have some of the press clippings of that day, in which it was said how unfair it was for an opposition so soon after an election to stand against a government which had a majority; not a majority dependent on allies, but a majority in the house. Finally the Conservative party introduced closure and the legislation respecting the navy went through. It went to the Senate, the Senate turned it down, and it never came back because the Liberal party was right in its stand. The Conservative leadership realized, after the fullest discussion had taken place, that such was the fact.

It is well to read what took place when the question came before the House of Commons in the session of 1912-13. Closure was moved on April 9, 1913, as recorded at column 7411 of *Hansard*. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Hon. J. D. Hazen rose in their places, and the speaker was the leader of the opposition. Mr. W. B. Northrup then rose and moved that Hon. J. D. Hazen be heard; he was one of the Conservative ministers from the province of New Brunswick. Then Sir Wilfrid said:

When you have a majority in this house, that is what we have to expect from you—shame!

They are not my words; they are the words of one of the greatest parliamentarians in all Canadian history. Then the motion was put and was carried.

Sir Wilfrid spoke later on, as reported at column 7430, as follows:

But no; he had not a word to say, but to apply closure in anticipation—

Then at column 7432 he is reported as saying this:

During the 15 years I was in office it sometimes happened that friends came to me and told me that I was not doing justice to myself or to the party, but that I should impose closure, as had been done in many parliaments. Sir, I am a Liberal of the old school; I have been brought up in the school of Fox and of the old leaders of the Liberal party; and I could not bring myself to the point of depriving a minority in parliament of such a valuable weapon as it would be deprived of by the introduction of closure. Perhaps I was wrong; perhaps I was too generous. Nay, I was not; I would rather stand here today, having refused, after the 15 years of my administration, to impose closure, and having decided to abide by the old rules. The rules of the house are intended to apply to the discharge of the duties which the house owes to the country, and to the sovereign.