

*Procedure and Organization*

to impose rules of closure on us, as I said a while ago?

I go one with the quotation:

The Secretary of State, to whom this undemocratic legislation was attributed, after having been recognized as the author of the rule of closure and other narrow Tory legislations, was more honest when he cynically admitted that he excepted the Conservative party to obtain the votes of those to whom is given the right to vote on this bill and the Liberal party to lose the votes of those to whom that right is denied.

I hope the Secretary of State was not talking seriously; he did not do himself justice. I have great admiration for his talent, but I do not hesitate to say that a man whose morals and convictions allow him to consider as justifiable the trituration of the elections act just before a general election in order to ensure the return to power of his party, is not morally fit to hold a high administrative position in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this motion constitutes, in my view, an expression of non-confidence on the part of the government, in itself and in the Canadian people. It is an admission that it does not have the support nor the confidence of the country. It is a self-accusation, which proves its weakness as a democratic government.

Parliament is forced by the government to pass a measure which is contrary to the most elementary principles of a democratic government. It breaks the fundamental law without which liberty cannot exist, that is, the equality of all citizens before the law. One of the major clauses of the Magna Charta for which the French people have fought in the past provides that any citizen has an equal right to take part in law-making and in the appointment of his representatives and agents.

A representative parliament must properly and justly reflect the nation, as well as its proportions and characteristics. Any Canadian citizen has a sacred right to have his fair share of the national representation. Those are not German principles, but the tenets of freedom. And it is in order to uphold and preserve such principles throughout the world that Canadian soldiers have fought in Europe.

The rights of the people and the privileges of parliament must be preserved against all comers. But, Mr. Speaker, what can we expect of the present government which sets a bad example and shows absolute contempt for the authority of parliament.

During a trip that I made to Paris last December, I had the opportunity of discussing with French Parliamentarians all the improvements that they wanted to make to the National Assembly. In this connection, I

[Mr. Dumont.]

shall mention only one article which stated that members who wished to have the right to speak in the National Assembly were justified.

England and France, cradles of culture, surely deserve our attention.

What was this new amendment seeking? It reads as follows:

Of course, the representation of the isolated members—that is those not registered with a political group (approximately 3 per cent of the total number) gives rise to a special problem. Special provisions have been approved in June 1967 to allow them to have access to committees; previously, once established the committees could appoint isolated members by means of a vote. The present orders have been worked out so as to allow any isolated member to sit on a committee, although there remains the principle that a member can be appointed to only one standing committee.

While within the Canadian parliament some people try in every way to prevent democracy from making itself heard, in a country as old as France, on the contrary, elected citizens, even though they do not belong to a political party, are allowed to express their views in committees. And it is in the name of that freedom which can express itself in those democratic countries that we ask that democracy be also respected in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, because they were for convenience and efficiency, democratic governments throughout history have collapsed. In the absence of other grounds, hon. members would be well advised to establish the kind of government that now exists in Russia and that existed yesterday in Nazi Germany. Of course, such governments leave nothing to be desired with regard to convenience and efficiency, but they do not put up with certain other things, as hon. members, I am sure, will readily understand.

History offers plenty of pertinent instances. I have some before me. However, I shall not take my time nor that of the other members to quote long excerpts of history books to show how convenience and efficiency have wrecked democratic governments in the past, but I shall merely refer to a few cases.

Let us think, for instance, of Athens, Rome and Venice, which had democratic governments, as well as of England at the time of Oliver Cromwell.

We can make a remarkable comparison between the present situation and the one which cost Athens its democracy. I shall quote a short paragraph of the works of Basil