

Carroll) quoted a part of the remarks of the right hon. the leader of the present Government on that occasion. I shall not repeat anything that my hon. friend has quoted, but I would call attention to a portion of my right hon. friend's speech as follows:

I understood the hon. gentleman to refer to some English rule, but so far as the English practice is concerned, they go infinitely further than I hope we shall ever be obliged to go in this country. If we carried out the English practice to the full we would adopt the English system of closure, under which the passage of the estimates would be reduced to very little more than a farce. Often a sum of £10,000,000 is voted by the Commons of Great Britain after a discussion of not more than two hours' duration. We do not require any restriction of that kind in Canada, and it would be a most unfortunate thing to attempt to restrict discussion as the hon. member for Lunenburg proposes. There has been no very great evil attendant upon the practice of this House since Confederation. Hon. gentlemen who desire to bring a matter of public importance to the House usually give notice in advance. That is certainly done when there is intention to move an amendment to the motion that the House go into Committee of Supply.

He goes on:

I decidedly object to the passing of this motion; first, because according to the usual order of procedure such a proposal should be referred to a committee; and, in the second place, because it does not seem to me that there is an abuse of the present practice which would justify us in making such a very important amendment to the rules.

Mr. McIntyre, then Deputy Speaker of this House, made some remarks and his opinions are entitled to great weight. He said:

I cannot say that I have given the question much consideration, and I would not address the House at all but for the fact that you, Mr. Speaker, announced me as the seconder of the motion. But so far as I have considered it, I have not found myself favourable to it. So that I must decline to take the position of seconding the motion.

My right hon. leader on that occasion took a position identical with that which he has taken as leader of the Opposition. I will not quote his remarks at length but they were then as strong in opposition to the proposal to restrict the privileges of members as are his utterances in this House against the resolution proposed by the right hon. leader of the Government. I will give but one brief quotation from his speech on that occasion. He said:

On the whole, so far as the privileges of members are concerned, I think we had better stick to our rules.

On that occasion Mr. Sproule, representing East Grey, said, referring to the privilege of presenting grievances on a motion to go into Committee of Supply:

Mr. EMMERSON.

It is one of the valuable rights of this House, and one which should not be given up, that any member may bring before the House any grievance before supplies are voted.

And so I could quote the opinion of other hon. members of that time whose opinions ought to carry weight with their colleagues in this House. I could also quote the remarks of my right hon. leader to show further that his whole influence was exercised in the direction of preserving to the people the privileges which their representatives enjoy in this House. For, this is not a matter which relates only to the members of the House, but it concerns mainly the people whom the members are sent here to represent. This is a curtailment of the privileges of the people which privileges they ought to continue to enjoy.

Now, I have mentioned the character of the resolution, but the possible consequences of that resolution are a greater menace to the people of this country. We must realize that in Canada there are many diverse interests. We have within our boundaries men of different races and creeds, and we have minorities whose rights, under our rules and under the procedure of parliamentary government to-day, are in the fullest possible way safeguarded, but which under the operation of this proposed rule, will be imperilled and menaced every session—aye, every week, and, I would almost say, every day of the session. We have heard very much about large financial and other interests in this country. It is only within the few last days that we have heard of great railway magnates coming to this Parliament with respect to financial assistance; with respect to pledging the credit of the country; with respect to additional subsidies and bonuses. It is inevitable that this Parliament should from time to time be invaded by those who are seeking to build up certain interests. Under our present rules, however, nothing could be railroaded through this House; every constituency would have the right to protect itself through its representative; every province would be in a position to defend itself in this Parliament. But change the present rules and the opportunity is afforded for an invasion of Parliament to secure special privileges. I do not cling to the idea that this rule is framed for that purpose, but I do say that in adopting it you are creating a dangerous engine that could be seized upon and taken advantage of by those who would be unworthy enough to do so. The right hon. leader of the Government and the hon. member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Meighen) have said: 'Oh, no government would ever so act or do this or do that; this rule will be exercised reasonably, and fairly and justly.' That may be;