

discussion of any point of order before there is a ruling from the Chair.

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Mr. Speaker: Will the House allow me to make an explanation? As the rule is laid down here, it says: 'the point of order may be debated.' I take it that that is the usual phraseology used in Acts of Parliament where 'may' means 'shall' or 'must.'

That has not been appealed from, and must not that be regarded as established?

Mr. SPEAKER: I did not give a ruling at all, but as the appeal to the House had been settled, so that members might understand it, I quoted from Bourinot with reference to a matter which was not covered by the rules, and said that was my understanding of it.

Mr. McKENZIE: That is a ruling.

Mr. NICKLE: So much with reference to what was before the House on that Saturday evening. Now, to come to what I may call the action on appeal. The hon. member for Kent (Mr. Robidoux) who was in the Chair, as I remember, had listened with considerable patience to a long and perhaps somewhat tedious debate. He rose to give his decision when, as the hon. member for St. John says, several members on the other side of the House rose to their feet and persistently protested most vigorously against what he was about to do. I have no right to impute motives to hon. members. But it is a well known fact that for some two weeks the stress and strain in this House had been most severe. Members' nerves were frayed and the slightest thing caused apprehension and, to an extent, discord. The rumor had been rife in the corridors that the Government were contemplating some extraordinary move to cut off discussion. I am inclined to think that hon. members opposite, in their anxiety and owing to their loss of sleep, hugged this delusion to themselves till they came to the conclusion that the thought in their minds was the actuality; and when the hon. member for Kent rose they thought that critical moment had come, that the crisis was here, they thought the time had come for a dramatic scene that would permit them to pose before the country as martyrs for free speech. But what is free speech in the deliberations of a body of this kind? Does it consist of tiresome reiterations and repetitions? Does it consist in a multitude of words at times devoid of argument? Is not the very object of free speech that men may be convinced? It seems to me that there are men in this House who come here with the sincere desire to give some of their time and no little service to the country; and I use the expression advisedly, when I say that if there are many sittings of this sort, if

Mr. McKENZIE.

the time of this House is to be taken up by numerous and innumerable speeches such as we have had to listen to, the time is not far distant when Parliament will be filled by professional politicians and the business interest of this country will not be represented. There are men on this side, and I know that there are men on the other side, who object most strongly to the terrible waste of time that has gone on here. Of course, ambition carries men away. I have admitted and do admit that it is an ambition that any man may cherish to occupy a Government seat, to be leader of a department and to impress his individuality upon the country. But there does come a time when, in my judgment, discussion should cease. Members who come here, not with the desire simply to advance their political interests but to give some of their time to their country, to their constituency and to the advocacy of the principles which they believe are right, should not be discouraged from entering public life, that the affairs of the country may fall altogether into the hands of the so-called professional politicians. I sympathize with men who have occupied prominent positions, and who, through the irony of fate, or, as they think, the caprice of the electorate, have been hurled from high place and either driven out of this House or left on the Opposition benches. But we have majority rule in this country. That is the principle upon which our government is founded—that the party that leads in an election shall be allowed to rule. And gentlemen opposite should conform to that principle; they should not risk all the principles to which we attach importance on a so-called gambler's chance in the hope that they may lure the electors back to their allegiance and restore themselves to the seats of power. Perhaps I should not go into this matter at such length; but I speak as one who regrets the unfortunate waste of time which has taken place in this House during the past three or four months through the tedious repetition of arguments and weary reiteration of words. As I say, the hon. member for St. John is utterly wrong when he says there was any effort to stifle free speech.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. NICKLE: Hon. members opposite may laugh, but the attitude of the Chairman, as I understand it, on that occasion, was that he had listened to the discussion of the point of order ad nauseam for two hours and a half. Words had been passed two and fro across the Chamber until everybody was familiar with everything that could be said on the subject, and the Chairman then rose to give his ruling. Suddenly bedlam prevailed. The hon. member for St.