

been a member and you know that I have spoken only on occasions when I felt it to be my duty to my constituents and to the country, as a member of this House, to address you. Nor have I ever taken any part in the discussion of parliamentary rights or technicalities or questions of detail, leaving such discussions to others with more legal acumen and better training for such debating. I deem it to be my duty to this House to discuss the reason and purposes of the amendment to the rules now before the House and the consequences which will flow from the adoption of this amendment. I also feel it my duty to refer to the manner in which this resolution has been placed before the House. We had all known for some days past that we could expect some form of Closure Bill to be placed before the House; the Prime Minister had given notice of this resolution and therefore we were prepared to learn of something which perhaps we might not care to accept. But no member on this side of the House, from the right hon. leader of the Opposition down to the humblest member, expected to witness such a spectacle as we witnessed on Wednesday last when this resolution was introduced and forced upon this House. Coming from one of the smaller provinces of the Dominion, from the Maritime provinces, one of the smaller bodies in the Confederation, I was perhaps more struck by the proposed amendment than most members of this House. We in the Maritime provinces have always been solicitous of the rights of minorities, rights consecrated by the British North America Act. We in the Maritime provinces, no matter what our religion or position in life may be, are all in a minority and we have attached great weight to the guarantees given to us by the fathers of Confederation, those great principles which were fought for by Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia and Wilnot in New Brunswick. We have felt that however great the prosperity of the West might be, we in the East, we of the minority, could always depend on the good will and generosity of the majority. We never expected that a Prime Minister from the Maritime provinces—and we have had others from those provinces, like Sir Charles Tupper and Sir John Thompson—would bring before the House such a resolution as this, in such a manner as this has been presented to us. Some of the newspapers of this city, notably the Ottawa Journal, have referred to riots which have commenced in the House of Commons. I would like them to tell me, if riots have been commenced in this House, where they have commenced; I would ask the leader of the Government or any of his colleagues if they did not commence within the precincts of the council chamber last October when

Mr. TURGEON.

the Hon. Mr. Monk, the Minister of Public Works in the Prime Minister's Cabinet, finding that the Government were not keeping the pledges and promises which he had made to the people of his province forced open the door, broke his locks and chains and left the Government. During the last forty years we have never doubted the ultimate preponderance of the West, due to the great increase of population there. I have always maintained that we had nothing to fear from the West, and that whether a member came from the Yukon or from Alberta or from British Columbia, the moment he entered the sanctuary of the Canadian nation, he would at once become a champion of British liberty and freedom and authority and so we felt that the lower provinces had nothing to fear from the preponderance of the West. It may be that I am still justified in holding that opinion and that we in the East have more to fear from the forgetfulness of our old friends and neighbours, their faithlessness or the promises made to the people by their predecessors. I have taken pleasure on vaunting the good qualities of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, as a citizen and as a public man. Permit me to say that the action of the right hon. gentleman, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Marine and Fisheries on Wednesday last have affected my feelings perhaps more than anybody else, because they come from the smaller provinces to whom protection has been promised, and there can be no better protection than freedom of speech. We, the minority have had to contend for those rights and privileges which were guaranteed to us minutely and particularly by the actual terms of the Confederation Act, and we have had to secure them through the good will of the majority. We might have expected closure of some kind, like that perhaps in use in the British Parliament or in the United States Congress. But we are not to be compared in this Parliament to the British Parliament or to the Congress. We have rights in this House which must be respected, and I believe that the Maritime provinces would not have come into Confederation, which has been a blessing to the whole of Canada, if it had been known that the members of this Parliament would be subjected to closure which would interfere with the liberty of speech. My hon. friend the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Meighen), has endeavoured to explain away the position taken by the right hon. the Prime Minister. He is a young member for whom I have the greatest respect and consideration. He has shown a great deal of learning and legal acumen, and he has endeavoured to make an apology for the Prime Minister's introduction of this resolution and for the use of the previous