

the hon. member for Kent, then sitting as Chairman of the Committee, declared that he would hear no further debate on the point of order. The hon. member for St. John is entirely in error there. The debate went on for at least twenty minutes after I made that remark. It has been the custom in this House within my recollection, and I think this position is maintained by Bourinot, that even in the absence of any desire on the part of hon. members to debate a point of order, the Speaker may refer to hon. gentlemen of experience, of long standing in the House, either on one side of the House or on the other, and may ask their opinion on a point of order. I have seen that done, and I know that references to such incidents are to be found in Bourinot. I would not accede at all to the view which my hon. friend for St. John seems to entertain that, under the wording of the rule, there is absolutely unlimited debate, that the same thing may be said not only five or ten times but fifty or sixty times with regard to a point of order.

My hon. friend from St. John also alluded to a supposed desire on the part of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House to exclude from discussion the measure which is under consideration. I leave that to the judgment of all hon. members. I speak without any exaggeration or any heat when I say that during eleven of the days at least in which this matter was discussed in the Committee, the most absolute freedom of debate was permitted to hon. members on the other side of the House. All reasonable men on both sides of the House will concur in the absolute accuracy of what I am now stating.

Mr. PUGSLEY: I do not think so.

Mr. BORDEN: Then my hon. friend is the one exception.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Does my hon. friend think that that is so, bearing in mind the fact that we were kept here night and day continuously?

Mr. BORDEN: I am very glad that my hon. friend has reminded me of something which I might have forgotten. My hon. friend stated in the same breath two propositions, which seem to me to be absolutely inconsistent. In the first place he said that there had been absolutely no opportunity for discussion of the measure during those twelve days. In the next breath he said that there had never been so illuminating and instructive a discussion as had taken place during that period. How one can reconcile two statements of that kind does not occur to me at the moment; but I have no doubt that my hon. friend from St. John, with his usual ingenuity,

would be able to make an argument which he would regard as getting him out of even that dilemma.

My right hon. friend the leader of the Opposition professes himself to be somewhat scandalized by some remarks of my hon. friend the Minister of Finance.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Not 'somewhat,' but a great deal.

Mr. BORDEN: I accept the correction. I have a very good recollection that my right hon. friend was not very much scandalized on one occasion when a very much more forcible statement was made in this House by one of his colleagues then sitting beside him. I am not able to quote the exact language, but I am able to give the absolute substance of what was said by the predecessor of the Minister of Finance. That gentleman laid it down in so many words as a principle of parliamentary Government that the minority or Opposition in this House had absolutely no greater rights than those which the majority were prepared to concede to them. I have the reference to the language, and if my right hon. friend is not convinced, I will be glad to send it to him. I do not think the Minister of Finance has equalled his predecessor in that regard, because all he said was—

Mr. EMMERSON: Perhaps both are sinners.

Mr. BORDEN: But one very much more than the other, as I think the hon. member for Westmorland with his usual fairness will be prepared to concede—and I take his silence as acquiescence. I will not further dwell upon the remark of the right hon. gentleman, but will simply say that the Minister of Finance was merely laying down the principle that under one of the rules of the House, the Speaker, being responsible for decorum, might well, in the absence of any prohibitive rule take the action he did take on that occasion. Because after all there is a certain law of self-preservation that must be regarded by Parliament as well as by every other institution; and, when a scene of very great disorder is in progress I think that a great deal of latitude ought to be allowed to the Speaker.

And there is a circumstance which seems to have been somewhat overlooked but which should be mentioned in this connection. Hon. gentlemen who have spoken on this question on the other side seem to have had it in mind, for some reason which I cannot appreciate, that the action of the Speaker in taking the Chair for the purpose of bringing back the House and Committee to a condition of order was in some way directed against hon. gentlemen on the other side. I do not so regard it. The