

your decision on the point of order, to remember that this ruling will be a precedent. Of course, it can be appealed to the House with the Speaker in the Chair, but I would remind you of the rules as given by my hon. friend the member for Portage la Prairie which I have just read. If you rule that the hon. member for Portage la Prairie was wrong and that a speech of one member is a debate, then the Government owes to itself and to this House, and particularly it owes it to this side of the House to reconsider that rule and let the country know just what it means before it is put through. I do not wish to use unparliamentary language, but if a resolution of this kind were passed in some body outside of this House under a wrong interpretation, we would say it was passed under false pretences because those concerned did not understand the effect of it. If your ruling is that one speech means a debate, then we passed this rule under false or wrong impression given by this Government through the member for Portage la Prairie..

Mr. MEIGHEN: I think, before coming directly to a point of order I should make clear in as simple language as I can, my position in regard to these rules. I do not know what is in the minds of hon. gentlemen opposite, much less what authority they have for their statement when they say that I spoke in any other sense than as a private member of this House. I endeavoured to speak with what intelligence I might on the rules. I had no authority in any official sense, or any other sense different from any other member of this House, to speak for the Government. Let that be understood once and for all. I gave my own interpretation, an interpretation for which I asked the sanction of my own intelligence. I neither gave nor pretended to give an interpretation for anyone else, much less an interpretation for the Government. In saying it, I do not wish in the slightest degree to change from the interpretation I gave. I believed that that interpretation was correct, and I believe now that it was correct, and that the Government will support me in it. Wherein is what I said in any way impeached? It will be remembered that the contention was vigorously brought forward by the hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie) that under the proposed rules the Government might shut off a discussion, even on the second reading of a Bill, without a word of debate. I endeavoured to meet that position and I said that within the reasonable meaning of that rule the Government would not be acting correctly or within the spirit of the rules if they did not permit the opposite side to

Mr. GRAHAM.

speak. The member who moved the second reading, of course, has addressed himself to that motion. That is his speech. He may add to it if he wishes but if he were then to move that the debate would be postponed he would not be acting within the reasonable meaning of the word 'debate' or the spirit of these rules; he would probably, if he wanted to fully interpret it, allow anyone on the opposite side to speak as well as himself. That is what I said, that is what was read and to that I adhere. The hon. member for South Renfrew has brought a very laboured argument, that it took me some time to apprehend, to show that because there must be debate before you can suspend debate, consequently a motion on which there is no debate may have an abortive or a half debate started. His difficulty is that he forgets that all sentences in law or anything else and all rules in the House of Commons as in law, must be interpreted in the stern light of common sense. When the rule says that there must be a debate before the motion to postpone it is made, the word debate must be interpreted in a reasonable way in the light of the sentence. But when the rule says that on a certain motion there can be no debate, that means that there can be no attempt at debate even. Does not my hon. friend think that that is reasonable and common sense? A man might be denied the privilege of eating something. The hon. member for South Renfrew would interpret that to mean that if he got it half way down and then spat it out he would not eat it and so obeyed the rule. I would not need to impress such primitive principles except to show the absurdity which must be clear to the usually frank and common sense mind of the hon. member for South Renfrew (Mr. Graham).

Mr. GRAHAM: My hon. friend has got in wrong on this.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Who could conceive him as Minister of Railways adducing such an attenuated and foolish argument?

Mr. GRAHAM: Not half as attenuated and foolish as the answer.

Mr. GUTHRIE: What has struck me about the interpretation of these rules most forcibly is that where it suits the Government to enforce a doubtful interpretation of the rule which will support their own side of the contention they do so, but where there is the slightest chance of a rule being interpreted favourably to the minority in this House, immediately they answer that the rule has no such meaning and was never intended to have such an application. There has only been