

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order, order.

Mr. NICKLE: Hon. gentlemen opposite say order. I do not entertain the views held by many people that the stage is a discreditable career. I think a man may obtain an honourable distinction on the stage, just as well as in this House. If the exigencies of public life and the overthrows that occasionally meet us all should bring about the time when my hon. friend might find himself severed from this House, he might turn his attention to that sphere of activity, which is useful as well as entertaining.

To direct my attention more particularly to the matter under discussion, if I understand the hon. member for St. John tonight, the main theme of his speech is this, that the right of free speech had been attacked, that the members of the Opposition and the people of this country had not been given an adequate opportunity of having the naval debate discussed, and that there was a preconceived and deliberate attempt on the part of the Government and more particularly on the leader of the Government, to stifle criticism and to prevent discussion. Such a position is absolutely at variance with the facts as they were that Saturday night. The discussion of the naval question was not before the House, that had been before the House and before the country for some three or four months. What was then under discussion was a point of order.

Mr. LANCASTER: Raised by the hon. member for St. John.

Mr. NICKLE: As my hon. friend says, raised by the hon. member for St. John. It was my privilege, perhaps my burden the afternoon in question, to be in the Chair. A somewhat similar point came up for discussion. The question for consideration then was whether or not members were entitled to discuss at length a point of order. Some one raised the question that there was unlimited discussion in regard to a point of order, and the Chair had ruled as follows:

When the hon. member for North Simcoe was in the Chair the other day, appeal was taken from his ruling in the House as to whether any debate was permissible on a point of order. The Prime Minister, prior to the question being put by the Speaker, ruled that it had been the custom of this House to permit reasonable debate on a point of order, and by that decision, of course, as Chairman to-day, I abide. If any hon. member cares to discuss the question briefly as to whether or not the hon. member for Red Deer was in order, the discussion being relevant, I am prepared to hear it, but I am not prepared to hear discussion on any other point.

Mr. WILSON (Laval): Who was the Chairman?

Mr. NICKLE: The speaker (Mr. Nickle) was the Chairman. Certainly, that ruling and decision on the point clearly establishes the principle that this House recognizes that on a point of order the question of the length of the discussion was in the discretion and within the control of the Chairman. That is not a question of the right of free speech at all; it is a question as to what length the Chairman thinks the committee should go in setting before him such information as may enable him to correctly interpret the spirit and the rules of this House.

Mr. WILSON: Where is the rule about that?

Mr. NICKLE: I think it is rule 18:

A member addressing the House shall, if called to order by the Speaker or by any other member, sit down while the point of order is being stated, after which he may explain. The Speaker may permit debate of the point of order before rendering his decision—

Mr. WILSON: How about the Chairman?

Mr. NICKLE: I am endeavouring to answer one question at a time. That is the best I can do.

—but such debate must be strictly relevant to the point of order taken.

There is another rule in this book—I cannot give the number which states that the rules that apply to the House with the Speaker in the Chair shall, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the Chairman when the House is in committee. Therefore if it is within the jurisdiction of the Speaker to say when a debate on a point of order shall cease, it is within the jurisdiction of the Chairman to apply that same rule on the same principle; and if the hon. member who has interrupted me knows of any authority to the contrary, I will give him the opportunity to state that authority.

Mr. WILSON: The hon. gentleman knows very well that a member is allowed to speak only once when the Speaker is in the Chair, but that he may speak many times when the Chairman is in the Chair.

Mr. NICKLE: I regret that my remarks were not listened to by my hon. friend. I can only express to him, in my vague and unsatisfactory way, what the rules of this House say. I cannot bring to him understanding of their import.

Mr. McKENZIE: I desire to ask a question. Referring to page 4945 of 'Hansard, I find the following:

Mr. Borden: I think it has always been the custom and practice, both in committee and in the House, that there should be reasonable