

Mr. GRAHAM: Under the interpretation of the rules by the only man who has given an interpretation, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Meighen), it takes two speeches at least to make a debate.

Mr. MEIGHEN: If the hon. gentleman has been speaking on anything, he has been speaking on a point of order. This motion is not debatable at all. Consequently there is no debate of one, two or ten speakers.

Mr. GRAHAM: This is a point to be cleared up, Mr. Chairman, and we might as well do it now. Either that rule went through this House with every member being under a false impression, or else I am entitled to make a speech on this question. The hon. member for Pictou (Mr. Macdonald) asked a question of the Prime Minister with reference to the interpretation of the rule, and he was told that the interpretation would be given in due course. Following him came the hon. member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Meighen), making, as he usually does, an elaborate speech interpreting the rule. He distinctly laid down for the Government the interpretation of the rule which says that there may be no debate, that interpretation being that one speech does not constitute 'debate,' that it takes at least two speeches to constitute a 'debate,' and at least one speech on one side and one on the other. According to that interpretation, I am not sure but that twenty men on this side could speak on a subject without it constituting a 'debate.' Let me read what the hon. member said. I quote from page 8529 of unrevised 'Hansard':

I would recommend the hon. member for South Wellington (Mr. Guthrie), if he has no better opinion of the meaning of the word 'debate,' to go to a dictionary;—

Listen to this. It is the Government interpretation, given by the member for Portage la Prairie on the promise of the Prime Minister:

—a debate necessarily implies a speech on one side and a speech on the other at the very least. I submit that within fair meaning of the word 'debate' the Government of the country would—

—and so on.

Now, I made a note of that at the time. I did the hon. member that honour so as to be sure that it would not be questioned. Although the rule may say that this motion is not debatable, the interpretation of the word 'debate' as laid down by the Government is that to constitute a 'debate' there must not only be two speeches, but a speech on one side and a speech on the other side. So long as I alone speak on this question, it is not a debate according to the interpretation of the Government. I would go further and say that so long as there was no speech in opposition to mine, it would

not be a 'debate,' and hon. members behind me might all support me and it would not be a 'debate.' In another speech the hon. member used the word 'conflict.' I cannot turn to it at the moment. He was elaborating the idea that a 'debate' must be a difference of opinion, it must mean a conflict of words, a discussion where one argument was put against another. He elaborated that. But the interpretation was laid down in the words I have given. I could elaborate that further, because he said there was not any such thing as debate in Committee of the Whole. I could talk as long as I like, and I am not 'debating.'

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. mem—

Mr. MEIGHEN: I have no doubt Mr. Chairman, you are prepared to rule on the point of order.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. GRAHAM: I did not give way to my hon. friend from Portage la Prairie. I was not through with my speech. The Chairman wished to suggest something to me, and I am not nearly through.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. GRAHAM: I was going right along.

The CHAIRMAN: I assume that the hon. member speaks to the point of order.

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not know that I was really speaking on the point of order, but I will deal on a point of order now. I was pointing out that my hon. friend from Portage la Prairie was the mouth-piece of the Government—is so acknowledged. He spoke at the suggestion of the Prime Minister and gave the only expert explanation of the rules, and I followed him very closely. If any person understood the rule when he made that speech—I do not say that any person did understand it—it was the hon. gentleman. In answer to the hon. member for South Wellington who took the point that it was a debate when one member spoke, the hon. gentleman from Portage la Prairie came right back and made the statement that it would not be a 'debate' unless two spoke, and not only that, but that there must be speeches on either side. Now, I want to discuss the advisability, the common, horse sense embodied in the remarks of my hon. friend from Shefford, that we should go back to clause 2 and clean up this Bill in its order under the rules quoted by you, Mr. Chairman, and not jump from one section to the other. Until we know what the first section is we are not in a position to intelligently discuss or decide on the following sections. I would urge you very strongly, Mr. Chairman, before you give