

traordinary position of being asked to bind our conscience and our conduct as members of the House without being able to say whether the rules which are to bind us should govern or should not govern our procedure. It has been laid down by all constitutional authorities in this House that there is a procedure to be followed in amending the rules of the House. You, Mr. Speaker, are supposed to be one of the guiding spirits in the amendment of the rules of this House. A motion is generally placed in your hands that a select committee composed of a certain number of members be appointed in order to consider the rules, amend them if necessary, and after their report has been presented, a resolution has been brought into the House embodying their findings. Bourinot at page 305 says:

Whenever it is necessary to appoint a committee in the Commons to revise the rules and standing orders of the House it is customary to place it under the direction of Mr. Speaker, the motion being:

That a special committee of.....members be appointed to assist Mr. Speaker in revising the rules of the House, &c.

When this committee has reported, its proceedings will be ordered to be printed with the amendments in brackets, generally in the Votes and Proceedings; and after some time has been given to members for the consideration of the proposed changes, the House will resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on the report. When the rules or amendments to the rules are reported from the committee, they must be formally concurred in like any other resolutions; and when that has been done they regulate the procedure of the House.

The Prime Minister has not told us why he has disregarded all constitutional usage in this country and what principle or principles have guided him in following out the rules laid down by Bourinot in amending the rules of the procedure of the House.

Let me, for a moment or two, refer to the circumstances which brought about this extraordinary resolution. In 1909 a resolution was unanimously passed in this House respecting a naval policy for this country. In 1910 a Bill founded upon that unanimous resolution was presented to the House by the present leader of the Opposition, then the Prime Minister, and that Bill passed and became the law of the Parliament of Canada. The then Opposition, the present Government, contended that the policy which was then adopted, founded upon the resolution passed by the unanimous consent of the House, should be altered and they brought in what did not seem to meet with the approval of the electors of this country, a policy of contribution to the Imperial navy. The discussion, as you know, took some time. Members upon this side of the House, repre-

Mr. DEVLIN.

senting millions of the people of Canada, thought it necessary to exercise all the privileges of their mandate in contesting a policy which was altogether contrary to the policy unanimously adopted by the House in 1909 and in the course of that discussion, when simply exercising the privileges accorded to members of this House, the Government, finding that the discussion did not entirely suit them, awakened one day to the thought that the arguments of the Opposition were too strong, that they were appealing to the country and that the country would not have their policy. They therefore decided to bring in some measure that would stop the discussion. The Opposition, as I take it, are not opposed to the amendment of the rules of debate in the House. We are not contesting the right of the Government to have the rules amended; we are contesting the manner in which the rules are being amended, the time at which they are being amended and the procedure followed by the Government in making the amendment. I did not propose to speak at any length upon this question. I said that discussion was useless but I do wish to give more than my silent protest against the manner in which the Government has dealt with this question. I would like to point out that when hon. gentlemen opposite say they are basing their procedure upon the English procedure, they are acting in ignorance of what has been done in the English Parliament.

It has been asserted during the course of the debate that the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone introduced closure along similar lines. Mr. Speaker, you, who have devoted so much of your time to the study of the procedure which is followed in the English House; you who have made a special study of the debates which have taken place in the English House understand how fallacious such a statement made by hon. gentlemen opposite is. You remember, Mr. Speaker, that when Mr. Gladstone proposed the amendment of the rules in order to introduce closure, he allowed every possible latitude in the discussion of the question. You remember that Mr. Gladstone found that proper time could not be given to the reasoning out of these rules, and to the proper discussion of them, and he, of his own motion as Prime Minister, adjourned the English House of Commons from the month of August until the 24th of October, and called a session specially to consider the amended rules and the amending of the rules. You remember also what took place during the debates, and if any man in this House or in this country should remember why it was that Mr. Gladstone refused to allow closure to be placed in the hands of a