

Mr. EMMERSON: He could report to the House.

Mr. AIKINS: If he was about to censure he ought. He was not about to censure, and it would be absurd to say the Chairman could report to the House even if he desired, with such a bedlam as was then prevailing. The Speaker, seeing and knowing the situation, followed the precedent and authority and acted with perfect propriety in the matter by taking the Chair. The hon. gentleman from Pictou (Mr. Macdonald) also pleases me in his attitude of certainty; he speaks so self-convincingly, and with such cocksureness that one would imagine he considers he is the Day of Judgment in trousers, and that when he has spoken the last word has been said. But it so happens that this rule 14 is entirely inapplicable as I have shown, and therefore Mr. Speaker properly exercised his authority to prevent the fair fame or our country and the honour of this House of Commons from further blot and greater indignity than was being inflicted upon it when he intervened.

Hon. WILLIAM PUGSLEY (St. John, N.B.): My hon. friend (Mr. Aikins) has done me the honour to refer to me in terms which I suppose he thinks complimentary.

Mr. AIKINS. Surely.

Mr. PUGSLEY: I am sure that the hon. member, with that reputation he has for Christian forbearance towards his fellow men, would not be guilty, even in this Parliament, of using unkind words to any member, and, therefore, I shall take the remarks of the hon. member to be characterized with that innate desire, for geniality which sometimes carries him beyond his surroundings and even beyond himself. You, Mr. Speaker, are probably not oblivious of an occasion during this session when that was the fate which befell my hon. friend. My hon. friend refers to the fact that on one occasion I had advanced in front of my seat. When the hon. gentleman was making the speech to which I have made reference, he was continually out in front, not only of his own seat but of half a dozen other seats, on the floor of the House. So far as I am concerned, I do not regret the part which I took in endeavouring to prevent as far as possible the Chairman of the committee from accomplishing what I thought would be a most serious breach of the rules of this House. There come times in the history of all parliaments when, if chairmen of committees act in a tyrannical and unparliamentary manner, it becomes the duty of those who are called upon to guard the rights of the minority to act as best as they may in defence of those rights. It is an extraordinary fact—indeed, it is a fact which reflects credit upon hon. gentle-

Mr. AIKINS.

men opposite—that not one of those gentlemen, who have spoken upon this question, has attempted to justify the course which the Chairman took in shutting off discussion. The hon. member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Meighen) says: oh, well, if the Speaker had no authority to order him to shut off discussion and to put the vote, what harm would it do? The order of the Speaker would be like waste paper; it would be of no force or effect, and no harm would be done. My hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. White), with that cautious attitude, which I suppose he has learned how to assume by reason of the responsible position in which he has been placed, although he is a lawyer, says that he will not venture to express an opinion one way or the other. My hon. friend from Brandon (Mr. Aikins) has not ventured to express an opinion. As one humble member of this House, and having some little knowledge of parliamentary rules, I shall say that the action of the Chairman was wholly at variance with the rules of this House. I am also prepared to say, and I say it with all deference and respect to you, Mr. Speaker, that the order which you gave to the Chairman to continue in his course of shutting off discussion and of taking the vote on that question, was entirely contrary to the rules which ought to govern this House. What were we to do under those circumstances? We were brought face to face with a condition of affairs which, if the views of hon. gentlemen opposite and the course they had outlined and outlined deliberately for the purpose of taking away the right of free speech which belongs to the minority in this House, had been followed out, would have rendered unnecessary any alteration of the rules of the House. They were applying closure against the rules of the House. They were taking a course which would be far more detrimental to the right of free speech than if they had the manliness to amend the rules, to introduce closure and make it one of the rules of the House. Without closure, without the right to shut off discussion, they attempted in violation of the rules of the House to shut off discussion and to deprive the minority of the right of free speech. When they attempted to do that, what were we to do?

Some hon. MEMBERS: Fight.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Were we to allow the Chairman to continue in that unparliamentary course? If he had done so, the gravest possible blow would have been struck at the rights of the minority in Parliament. The right of free speech would have been taken away. There would have been taken away the opportunity to discuss important questions—to discuss them, not for the purpose of convincing hon. gentlemen opposite, but for the purpose of placing the facts before the people of this