

was customary for the Speaker to take part in the proceedings of the House. It is well known that in the legislature of Lower Canada Mr. Papineau, when Speaker, left the Chair, took his place on the floor of the House, and participated prominently in the discussions; a course which would not be tolerated to-day. As time went on it was looked upon as unseemly for the Speaker to take part in any proceeding in the House. Of course, on matters which are not of a political nature, or which pertain to the House of Commons in a departmental sense, but not otherwise, Mr. Speaker does give explanations without objection from either political party, and he does so as a simple member of the House or as the head of the department of legislation. But, how can it be contended that Mr. Speaker can at any time, if he thinks the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole is not exercising his duty properly, interrupt the proceedings and give direction to the Chairman of the Committee? In my humble judgment, there is no possible excuse for such a proceeding. On Saturday, the 15th instant, when Mr. Speaker took the Chair as he did and interrupted the proceedings of the Committee of the House, I think the House would have been very much astonished, and Mr. Speaker himself would have been very much astonished, if he had been told that the Committee was *functus officio*, because, having risen without reporting, it ceased to exist. The Committee resumed without that point having been taken, although had it been taken I think it would have been based on very good procedure. If I say this, it is not that I want in any way, Mr. Speaker, to impugn the motive which prompted you to act as you did on that occasion.

I repeat, Sir, that the rules of the House are the safeguard not only of every member of the House but of our parliamentary system of government. They are the result of the wisdom and experience of many centuries in the only country which has ever properly understood parliamentary government. The rules of the House, therefore, have a sacredness which ought not lightly to be interfered with. Not only under the British parliamentary system, but under the British legal and constitutional system, adherence to precedent has been the basis of England's greatness. In the language of Tennyson:

Freedom slowly broadens down.
From precedent to precedent.

and all the precedents we have to guide us on this point are against the action taken by Mr. Speaker; and, unless there is some definite rule to the contrary, precedent is the law of Parliament. The rules may work to the advantage or to the disadvantage of one party or the other to-day; but woe to the party, whether in opposition or

in power, which does not abide by the rules. If violation of them is attempted by one side or the other, so sure as the sun will shine again, the party that violates the rules will rue its conduct. If the majority in this House administer the rules as they are conceived, well and good; but so sure as they violate their spirit and letter, so sure will the day of retribution come. I do not say that by way of threat; I say it to emphasize the paramount necessity there is for observing the rules of procedure in this Parliament.

As to the argument about the inherent power of the Speaker, I was greatly shocked and scandalized to hear the Minister of Finance speak as he did to-day. At one time he would not, I believe, have argued after such a fashion; but to-day he laid down the proposition that it is in the inherent power of the Speaker to dictate to the Chairman of the Committee what should be his ruling—that the Speaker was in effect the censor of the House.

Mr. WHITE (Minister of Finance): May I say to my right hon. friend that I do not think I used any such argument?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Will you repeat what you said?

Mr. WHITE: I referred to the condition of grave disorder existing in the House at the time, and I said in substance that the Speaker in my judgment was essentially the guardian of order in this House, that he must be the judge in a particular case of how he should enforce order and that, after he had come to a decision as to the mode in which he should enforce order, then there remained only an appeal to the House against his decision. What I emphasized particularly was that which my right hon. friend has evaded discussing altogether, and that was the grave and tumultuous disorder that prevailed in this House on the particular occasion in question.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I have not discussed that because I was not present.

Mr. WHITE: That is the point.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: That is not the point.

Mr. WHITE: That is the point of my argument.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: The point is: whether there was disorder or not, had the Speaker the power to interrupt the proceedings of the Committee of the Whole? I have to tell my hon. friend that the Speaker is not the censor of this House; that he is simply in the Chair to act as umpire between party and party, that he is there to maintain order, and that when he leaves the Chair his power as Speaker is exhausted. There is at the present time a