

they turned the way this Parliament is now about to turn. Let us look at the immense volume of legislation so massive and so splendid, that has been achieved and is now being achieved in the British House. Let us look also at the path over which this ponderous burden is being carried; a path blazed first by that great Liberal chieftain, perhaps the most illustrious leader that ever adorned that Parliament, and followed later by them all

Mr. ARTHUR LACHANCE (Quebec Center): (Translation.) Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has once more, this afternoon, given the Government an opportunity to clearly set forth its views in regard to the purport of the resolution now, and for a few days past, under the consideration of the House. Thanks to the motion of adjournment introduced by the hon. member for Missisquoi (Mr. Kay), the right hon. leader of the Opposition has been able to put some precise questions regarding the correct interpretation of the new rules. However, what happened under our eyes? The right hon. Prime Minister, realizing the full force of the remarks made by the leader of the Opposition and feeling that he was unable to answer them without implicating himself, evaded the question and took refuge in repetitions and generalities, the effect being to further confuse matters. So we are more than ever justified in looking askance at the motives which are said to inspire the promoters of those three new rules embodied in the resolution, and in continuing to oppose them with all our might.

The resolution referred to was introduced in this House on April 9th instant. The Prime Minister himself, before all others, attempted to impress us with a favourable view of its hazy, but rather awe-inspiring provisions. The object, we are told, is to amend, by improving them, the rules which govern the proceedings of this House. Obviously, however, the end in view is a mistaken, false and objectionable one. Its purpose, it is claimed, is to ensure a greater measure of fair-play in the conduct of the business of the House; as a matter of fact, however, the principle embodied in this resolution implies a rank injustice, and an abuse of power; it gives full sway to brutal force, to despotism, to tyranny itself. In order that tyranny should firmly take root, it is necessary to have recourse to despotic means. That is what the Government has done. Those who were present at the sitting of April 9th inst. will agree with me, if they are sincere; those who have witnessed how promptly the leader of the Opposition was deprived of his right to address the House, will ever be satisfied of the truth of my statement. As honourable gentlemen will remember, the Prime

Mr. MEIGHEN.

Minister had just closed his speech in support of the proposed regulations; he had put in action all his resources to clothe them with a semblance of plausibility.

Barely had Mr. Speaker read through the resolution which the Prime Minister had handed to him, than the leader of the Opposition was on his feet to answer him. It was his unquestionable right. For over five hundred years that parliaments have existed in the British kingdom, always and without exception it has been the practice to allow the leader of the Opposition to answer forthwith the leader of a government submitting an important proposition. If then, as will be readily admitted, a long standing usage is equivalent to a right in matters relating to British institutions, and particularly to Parliamentary institutions, the leader of the Opposition could, not merely as a matter of grace, but as a matter of indisputable right, address the House, following immediately on the leader of the Government, to extend his approval or express his disapproval, whether in the form of an amendment, or in any other shape recognized by the rules of parliamentary procedure.

Nevertheless, within the view of the whole country, the Government refused him that right; not only that, but the Government deprived him of that right while in the exercise of it. Indeed, the leader of the Opposition had been on his feet for a few seconds when the hon. Minister of Marine and Fisheries rose in his turn. Hon. members must have all noticed that so characteristic attitude of his, with head thrown forward, as if intent on grasping some object; he was, as a matter of fact, preparing to lay hands on something quite precious; he was preparing to lay hands on the freedom of speech and on the rights of the Opposition. The Speaker gave the floor to the leader of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House and in doing so was doubly justified by the old-time practice which I referred to, and by the fact that the leader of the Opposition had been on his feet for some minutes. The latter gentleman having thus been adjudged the floor by the Speaker, rose once more and proceeded to address him in the usual terms: Mr. Speaker.

So I am justified in stating that the leader of the Opposition had already begun his speech. In the ordinary course of affairs, a member thus having the floor cannot be interrupted without his consent, unless it be on a point of order. In this case, then, the Government, through the brute force of the majority, silenced the leader of the Opposition after the latter had begun speaking and was availing himself of his right to answer the Prime Minister.