

and be deemed to have been read three times and passed in this House?

If I am to take the Speaker's ruling today to mean that the government majority can do whatever it wants, then the government can do that too. Members opposite shake their heads. I say: why not? If the government can abandon the rules that dictate how we introduce and pass bills in this House and trample a fundamental principle of Parliament, if it can do that today, why can it not do it tomorrow? There is no rule. There is no principle that remains to protect us, the opposition, the minority. It does not exist. I cannot find it. What if the government did it? Let us wait and see.

I wish what was being proposed was a reform that had been discussed, debated which achieved a large consensus, maybe even unanimity. It is not a reform. It is retrograde and it is destructive and it comes from, not a lot of members in Parliament, but from cabinet, the Queen's Privy Councillors who sit in this Parliament.

This is a sad day and I know it will be revisited. I want my constituents to know that if there was anything I could do to stop this today, I would. That is why that principle supporting the minority is the number one item on the number one page in the number one chapter in our rules. However, there is nothing I can do. I can simply talk. I can debate. I can encourage members opposite to change their views.

In any event, I put that respectfully to the Chair and to my constituents. The rules have been breached and the rules that protect the minority have been breached, the rules in this House. To quote Sir Edmund Blake from 1873—I happened to read this last night in some casual reading I was doing and you have heard this before—he said: "The privileges of Parliament are the privileges of people and the rights of Parliament are the rights of the people".

It is not just our little group here on this side of the House of Commons that is affected by this. It is everybody on the street. There are some members of the public here in the House tonight.

I want to make a confession on behalf of a lot of members, including members opposite. In this year of a

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huge deficit, a huge national debt, the Canadian public expects all members of Parliament to embark on the very old process of budget estimates, reviewing the government's spending. This is a process that is integral to our oversight function in this House. I want the public to know that we will have a total of five days to review the billions of dollars of spending of this government.

• (1950)

That is a very cynical result of the prorogation that this government has just embarked on. I wish the members opposite well in their attempt to rewrite the rules of Parliament, to trample on the rights and privileges of the minority which we are. I wish them well. It is a sad day. I hope that, before the vote, some of them will change their minds.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to make some very brief submissions on the resolution before us.

I concur completely with my friend and colleague who just spoke. I concur completely with all my colleagues who have spoken, and I would go so far as to concur completely with the Independent Conservative member for Annapolis Valley—Hants from the province of Nova Scotia. He was his usual eloquent self, and he has a lot of experience in this House.

He was shocked. He was extremely shocked at the actions of this government, at what is taking place here. That drove him to stand up and give one of the finest speeches I have ever heard him deliver in the seven years that I have been here in the House.

My experience in this House does not match the experience of the member from Nova Scotia, but the point he was making is a point that has been repeated time and time again by members on this side of the House. The issue is very simple.

We are now in the Third Session of the Thirty-Fourth Parliament. What does all that mean? The Thirty-Fourth Parliament is the Parliament that was constituted as a result of a general election that took place two years ago when some people in this country made that terrible mistake and elected a Conservative government. They