

afternoon to the fact that Mr. Asquith, I think it was, in the British House of Commons dealt with an important subject in a thirty minute speech. But the conditions over there are not similar to the conditions here. In this country we go into far more necessary detail about local and provincial matters than they do in the British House of Commons, and while I desire to be loyal to the country of my birth I desire to point out that this is Canada and that we are Canadians, and that we should not always go to the mother country, where the conditions are very different from what they are here for examples in such matters.

Now, as the hon. member (Mr. Heaps) suggests, there is a remedy, and a very simple one, if there is abuse and the time of the House is taken up by long speeches, and that is to apply the closure. That is what it is for. We have a closure in existence now, rather a lengthy procedure, but it can be readily imposed. I know of a system of closure that is in force in the British Columbia legislature, which can be invoked in five minutes, and it is of the most drastic character. It is called moving the previous question. All a man has to do is to say "I move that the question be now put". It is not subject to debate, and the question is put. This system operates very effectively. We have a provision in our rules for putting the previous question, but it only results in preventing members from moving further amendments. The previous question in British Columbia immediately stops all debate and the question has to be put at once without further discussion.

At any rate these are the methods I would suggest, rather than doing away with the right of free speech. I defy any hon. gentleman—I may be wrong in this, but I will take a chance on it—who supports this rule, and a great many are going to do it, to give me an instance of any civilized government, except the very inferior ones, who have a system of limiting its speakers to forty minutes or any other period, and I would like to know the name of the civilized government which does not have some form of closure. Experience proves that it is desirable to have a form of closure, and not desirable to prohibit the free speech of hon. members. I think I heard the Minister of Agriculture saying, in an aside, "We are all progressing"—he did not say we are all Progressives, but that we are all progressing—but are we? If so, we are progressing backwards. This is a reactionary thing which I have never heard of before in this parliament. We are going back instead of forward. We are going to

take away from the common people the right of expressing themselves in parliament. In the past people have gone to great length and have shed blood to get the right of free speech. I am sorry at times to have to listen to members with whose views I do not agree, which I do not relish, but these hon. members are in the same position with regard to my speeches. However, that is a small price to pay for the privilege of free speech and the opportunity afforded us to express our views and to ventilate once or twice a session, the grievances of the people we represent.

If it is necessary to have this restriction, I will test the feeling of the House by moving to add at the end of this rule the words:

Except on budget debate.

That would give an opportunity, once at least during the session, for a member to talk on any subject he likes, as long as he likes. I do not think that is an unreasonable thing, and the privilege would not be abused. The idea of this rule is to shorten debate. Will it do so? What will happen? If the opposition decide to obstruct a bill, instead of putting up ten members to speak for three hours each, they will put up a hundred men to speak for forty minutes each, and what would be the result? You cannot prevent obstruction in this way. I think it is worth while to put up with some boredom in this House, in order to preserve the right of free speech.

Mr. IRVINE: The hon. member favours the closure rather than a limited time for each speaker. Suppose half a dozen members of the House were prone to make long speeches, and each got up and spoke for five or six hours, then closure was put on, would that be better than giving a greater number of members an opportunity to speak twenty minutes or forty minutes.

Mr. NEILL: If, as I suppose, the hon. member would suggest that these men were going to make six hour speeches for the sake of obstruction, it would not make any difference how it was done.

Mr. MARCIL: The hon. member referred to the budget debate. That is one stage. Under our rules a member can speak forty minutes on the budget debate. The budget debate is followed by a resolution which is followed by a bill, and there are sixteen different opportunities, before the bill passes the House, for a member to speak forty minutes.