

Mr. Diefenbaker: The right hon. gentleman supported closure in 1956 and flouted parliament, and he cannot explain it.

Mr. Pearson: No doubt it was retained by my right hon. friend and his government because they may have thought it might be necessary to use it in the future to prevent obstruction and filibustering. We have had a great deal of discussion on the matter before the house. The issue, therefore, is not now the right of debate, not the right of free and full discussion in parliament. The issue now is the right of parliament to make a decision after debate. If the official opposition or any opposition, because they feel so strongly about this matter, claim the right to prevent any vote by using the rules, then the government or members on this side of the house who feel equally strongly and sincerely have the same right to use the rules to bring about a vote after full discussion if that is the only way a decision can be reached. The other alternative is dissolution and an appeal to the people on the prevention of a vote.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, we will not have to follow either of these courses. But if we on this side are not to be prevented from exercising the right of decision, then the members of the opposition should show some responsibility by not prolonging the right of discussion until it becomes obstruction. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, a minority can impose its will on a majority by ultimatum, and this has been suggested in this debate. "Withdraw your measure or alter it and your tactics concerning it to suit us or we will bring parliamentary business to a standstill."

This would make a mockery of parliament and the parliamentary process. I am sure the right hon. gentleman does not contemplate or approve that result. Perhaps he will permit me to quote what one of his predecessors, Sir Robert Borden, had to say on this point on April 9, 1913, as found on page 7389 of *Hansard*. He said:

No one is more ready than I to acknowledge that liberty of speech and freedom of debate must be preserved, but I venture respectfully to suggest that these privileges must be observed and maintained under such conditions that they shall not be allowed to degenerate into license and obstruction.

Our friends in the New Democratic party have indicated they do not believe in the application of closure. They are not opposed as a party, and apparently some of their members are not opposed as individuals, to the recommendations of the report. I believe some of them will support those recommenda-

tions, from the record of votes we have already had. But they feel it is quite proper, and I am not criticizing them, to use the rules to stop debate on recommendations which they may not necessarily be going to oppose, so we can be forced by the rules to debate something else which they wish debated. That is not closure to bring about a decision, Mr. Speaker. That is a form of closure, using the rules, to prevent a decision by altering the course of debate. They have the right to do that. They have the right to use the rules for that purpose. If they can secure a majority for the application of the rules to alter the course of debate and postpone the discussion of a particular subject, they have that right.

Parliament's decision on this matter was assumed to be necessary 20 years ago. I repeat, is it to be prevented now? The government is not imposing anything on parliament. It is asking for respect for parliament's right to decide after full and complete debate. If we reject that right, then parliament becomes meaningless. That, Mr. Speaker, is the issue. The government proposes and parliament disposes. The opposition has a right and a duty to oppose, to criticize, to clarify, to hold up, but does not have the right to prevent a decision. I repeat, if it can do this then the parliamentary process is meaningless.

I hope, therefore, very sincerely that it will be possible to have an immediate decision on this matter after all the discussion that has taken place concerning it and, indeed, when every possible point of view has been put forward time and time again. It has been said that we on this side have no mandate to proceed with this matter. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition has argued that this is a deeply controversial issue, it is a divisive issue, and that we have no mandate to proceed at this time.

Parliament, Mr. Speaker, has a mandate to decide. It is said we are a minority government and we should not bring forward this controversial measure. We are a minority government, but this is not a minority parliament. So I hope this parliament will be given the right to exercise its fundamental duty; that is, to decide after a full and free debate.

Notwithstanding what some hon. gentlemen may have said in the heat of debate across the chamber, we on this side have one thought only in asking parliament to come to a decision on this matter, to decide one way or the other. We are concerned, as