

from all I can gather from remarks made by hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House, the statements made by Mr. Fielding, Mr. Fisher, and Mr. Paterson were to the effect that if the Government of that day were returned to power they would so amend the rules as to secure the passage of that particular measure. That was a perfectly proper comment and remark to make. Parliament was dissolved and the Government of the day were obliged to appeal to the people upon a particular measure whose enactment was prevented by the action of the Opposition of that day; and the Government of that day, had they been returned to power with that particular issue ratified by the people, would have had, impliedly, ample justification for the establishment of rules of closure to secure the passage of that measure and to make sure that the will of the people could not be blocked by the obstruction of a minority.

In 1907 I placed upon the Order Paper of the House an amendment calling for a two-day's notice of any motion made for the adjournment of the House or on going into Supply in order to discuss any matter. I was moved to place that motion upon the Order Paper in that particular session because on one or two occasions it had happened that very important measures were brought up for consideration by members of the Opposition of that day without the House having due notice. I thought it was unfair, and for a time I did think it was a fit and proper amendment to be made to the rules of the House that two day's notice of such motion should be given. The ultimate effect of that rule was not to limit debate; it was only to give ample notice so that the debate could be ample and complete. No rights of hon. gentlemen were affected nor could debate have been curtailed by such an amendment to the rules of the House. In moving the motion, I intimated that I did not intend pressing for a vote, but nevertheless the right hon. gentleman who leads the House (Mr. Borden) on that occasion said:

It rather takes the House by surprise to have a proposal of this kind made. The rules of the House are not lightly dealt with in this way. The universal practice is that so important a matter as an important amendment to the rules of the House should be submitted in the first place to a committee, considered by that committee and reported to the House, when the House would take it into consideration.

I quite agree with the position taken by the Prime Minister on that occasion, and it fortifies the position which I myself take this evening, that the amendment of the rules of procedure of this or any other

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parliament is a matter strictly and justly within the purview of Parliament, and that there is no authority, written or otherwise, to justify a government in assuming the right of initiating amendments to parliamentary rules. The Prime Minister proceeded:

We revised the rules of the House two years ago, and in the opinion of the House there was no occasion at that time for any such far-reaching amendment as is now proposed.

It would prevent the discussion of any grievance to go into Committee of Supply unless two days' notice were previously put upon the Order Paper.

The Prime Minister objected to what I do not think was a restriction upon debate or the presentation of grievances on going into Supply. But he seems perfectly contented with the rules which he has presented for our consideration, which will undoubtedly limit the opportunities of members to discuss grievances upon going into Supply. Nothing has happened in the history of this House since 1907 which would justify in the slightest degree the adoption of closure rules as proposed by the resolution.

As I have already said, it has been contended as a justification for this resolution that specific business, definite legislation, has been impeded by hon. gentlemen on this side of the House during the present session. In other words, the reason assigned for the passage of this resolution is that there has been a delay in the passage of the Naval Aid Act. I say that this does not afford sufficient justification for the enactment of this resolution. I say there has been no obstruction to the Naval Aid Act. The term obstruction, I believe, has been used on this side of the House. I perhaps might differ with some of my political conferees upon your left, but I say that at the most, admitting that there has been a very lengthy discussion on that particular Bill, all you can say is that the debate has been protracted. There was two weeks of continuous debate. But I hardly consider that as obstruction offered by hon. gentlemen upon this side of the House to the passage of the Bill. I look upon it as the answer to a challenge of the Government to all-night sittings, only that and nothing more. In a large sense, it was more a physical contest than a contest between the two parties of the House over the merits of the Naval Aid Act. Before an Opposition occupy more than the ordinary time of Parliament in opposing any parliamentary measure, there must be some reason for it. They must be in receipt of support from the public, otherwise they would not continue that protracted debate. They must feel that they have some manifestation from the