

to fetter the rights of the minority. I should be very sorry to see in a Canadian Parliament that such a necessity existed as appeared to exist in the minds of Mr. Gladstone's Government when they introduced certain resolutions respecting the clôture. I should be still more sorry to see here the system adopted in the United States Congress, where, on the motion for the previous question, a debate can be summarily cut off by the will of the majority. I should regret deeply to see either course taken in Canada. In England, the course taken by Mr. Gladstone, though an extreme one, is not so dangerous as it would be in this country. In England, there is a conservative feeling—I do not speak in a party sense—in the minds of the people of England and of their representatives in Parliament, against extremes. Both sides in England—those on the right and those on the left of the Speaker—know that only in the most extreme cases would the powers that Mr. Gladstone claimed and succeeded in carrying, be exercised. We are a younger country, we have not got the same steady anchorage that they have in the old country of England, and, whether we on this side continue on this side, or the hon. gentlemen opposite should succeed in ousting us, I am afraid we should not be so conservative. I am afraid that the power of closing a debate in a manner such as is now authorised in England, would be bad for us to enforce. I should be afraid of my own party; I need not say I should be still more afraid of the hon. gentlemen opposite; and therefore any suggestion of the kind that has been made to me—and the committee can well understand that in the present state of things, in the impatience of the general public against what seems to them obstruction, all kinds of suggestions have been made to me either to introduce the one system or the other, and to press it upon Parliament—I have steadily resisted, and I design to resist it. I think it is not for the permanent interest of Canada—I think it is not for the permanent interest of any Parliament of Canada—that any Government, until we are an older country and perhaps a wiser country, should have the power of shutting down the gate on the Opposition of the day. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, we can only offer such resistance as the majority can offer, by stating that eventually our will must succeed, that the conclusions we have come to must eventually prevail, or all representative government is a farce, or worse than a farce; the end, Sir, is tragedy. Now, Sir, with respect to this measure which is before the House, the discussion which has been continued so long was principally on a mere detail—on the interpretation clause. There is some speciousness in that argument, I must admit, that looking at the Bill as a whole, some definitions were of more importance than merely as definitions; but I have explained, and I pressed on the consideration of the committee, that the definitions being once settled, when we came to the enacting clauses, that was the time to fight out the difference of opinion, if any existed, between the majority and the minority. Had that view been taken, we should have been far on in the progress of the Bill, and the different clauses—with respect to the different franchises, with respect to the mode of registration of voters, with respect to the selection of the proper parties to settle the voters' lists—all these would have been discussed and discussed relevantly to the several propositions; and we should have been spared the painful scene of gentlemen being deprived of their rest, and speaking—avowedly speaking—not for the purpose of advancing or defeating the measure, but simply for the purpose of obstruction. In 1871, when I first introduced this Bill, I had the joint support of the present leader of the Opposition and my hon. friend who sits opposite me (Mr. Mackenzie) on the necessity for an election Bill. Anybody who looks at the debates of that day will see that that was admitted. The hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake), in his speech in 1870, said we should have an election Bill at once; he

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thought it would be well to keep the franchises, as then existing in the several Provinces, as being the proper franchises, and not the franchises which were mentioned in the Bill of 1870. In other words, he thought an election Bill should be passed, but that it should incorporate the various franchises of the four Provinces. That was the opinion of those two gentlemen as to the necessity of an election Bill, an opinion which nobody gainsaid, and which was not gainsaid by any gentleman who had studied constitutional law, except perhaps the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), who has several times spoken of the measure as being unconstitutional. But the fact that these gentlemen, in 1870, took that line, and at the same time thanked me for having invited both sides of the House to consider the question of the franchise, not in a party sense, destroys the argument which has been used here, more for the purpose of discussion than for the purpose of conviction, that the measure was unconstitutional. I invited at the outset the House as a whole to consider every clause of this Bill, in order to arrive at a reasonable franchise. In the discussion which took place on the motion in amendment, when the Speaker was in the Chair, I took the same line; I invited the Opposition to discuss the several clauses of the franchises as they came up. I failed, however, to succeed in inducing them, for I forget how many days, to pass the first clause, the interpretation clause. I hope this is not going to go on. The Government desire, and I believe I speak the will and desire of those who oppose us, that the various clauses of the Bill shall be fairly discussed, that there will be give and take in opinion, and that we may arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, or at some conclusion. At all events, it is quite clear that, viewing it as I do, representative institutions are on their trial, to use Prince Albert's expression, here; it is not possible for the majority in this House to yield to the menace, the threat of obstruction of the constitution by the minority, by yielding to the obvious attempt to worry out the patience of the House, the patience of the majority, and the physical strength of some of the majority. Now, Mr. Chairman, I was quite prepared, and am quite prepared, to discuss all the various objections which have been taken to the measure as they arise; I invite hon. gentlemen opposite to join with us in trying to reach some common conclusion, or, at all events, if we do not succeed in coming to some common conclusion, that they will come to this conclusion, that they have fully done their duty, that they have called the attention of Parliament, of the public, of those to whom we are responsible, to the alleged defaults of this measure, and having done their duty in this regard, they will not destroy all respect for representative institutions by adopting the course taken continually in the South American republics, where they have a semblance of representative institutions, a semblance of Parliament, but where—in every little South American Congress or Cortes, or whatever they may call it—the minority worries the majority to the utmost extent, and when they cannot do that any more, they rise in arms and issue a pronouncement. I hope in this House, in this northern clime, men who are accustomed to British institutions, who respect representative institutions, will not use the forms of Parliament which were devised for the purpose of enabling legislation to be made, as the means of obstructing all legislation. I speak with all earnestness, I speak with every desire to put an end to this abnormal state of things. Hon. gentlemen opposite have pressed such a strong view in opposition to this measure and its consequences, that I am willing to give them every credit for conscientious motives, but every man of common sense must know that after every possible view in opposition to a measure has been again and again given and reiterated with painful reiteration, the time has now come to allow the measure to succeed. I appeal to hon. gentlemen opposite, I appeal