

able here has been accompanied by a noticeable here has been accompanied by a tendency to silence on the part of members of the Cabinet, who in reality are, as one of your distinguished members has said, "only a committee of this House."

The unrest in the country which has brought about the unexampled spectacle of thousands of farmers leaving the important work of planting their crops to come to the capital to remonstrate with the Government, is known to every member of the House of Commons. We beg leave to intimate that this unrest is not related merely to the special matter which was discussed with the Premier and members of his Cabinet to-day. We cannot disguise from the House an apprehension that the liberties, of which the popularly-elected branch of the Legislature is the bulwark, may be dangerously curtailed during the period that the House is not sitting. In proof that this dread is not illusory, we would venture to inform the House that, in common with our fellow-citizens, here and throughout the country, we have observed certain innovations, the continuation of which we believe would be fraught with serious results to the confidence which the subjects of His Majesty have hitherto reposed in the working of that responsible government for whose unimpaired preservation forty thousand Canadian soldiers have laid down their lives.

Will the House permit us to speak more plainly what is in our minds? We have never believed that the conditions produced by the war demanded flagrant departures from the honoured processes of law enjoined by the constitution while Parliament is in session or is near assembling. We believe that reliance upon Parliament, instead of upon arbitrary authority, most effectively honours the guarantees of freedom which are embedded in the constitution. One considerable departure from sound practice may be accepted, but repetitions of it may be exceedingly dangerous, especially under such circumstances as now beset the state.

We therefore beg leave to remind the House of several instances in which, it seems to us, the liberties of the people and of their representatives have not been given sufficient consideration.

Twelve days before the meeting of Parliament in January, 1916, the authorized Canadian Army was doubled from 250,000 to 500,000 men. No British army had ever been doubled without recourse to Parliament. That it was done in Canada caused students of British history to enquire whether anything had occurred to warrant such a disregard of Parliament. Though this House of Commons has inherited some of the consequences of such an innovation, we desire to confine our respectful remonstrances to more recent events.

During this session there were riots in the city of Quebec. The House desired to discuss the serious situation thus created, and was entitled to declare what measures might be taken to prevent a renewal of such unhappy occurrences. It did not escape the notice of the country that immediately before the House proceeded to discharge its duty, there was put upon the Table a completed law, in the form of an Order in Council, which arbitrarily took out of its control the very question which the House of Commons was about to discuss.

Later there were other departures from the traditional practice of British law by equally astonishing proceedings. An Order in Council

was given to the House as a matter of information providing for the registration of the human power of the country, and setting up an entirely new criminal code in connection therewith, by creating several methods of punishment hitherto unknown to Canadian civilization. Surely such departure should not have been attempted in such a manner. Punishments created without the assent of Parliament naturally tend to provoke hostility. We feel we are performing a national duty in respectfully calling attention to such conditions.

The Order in Council endorsed by both Houses on April 18th virtually sweeps away the Military Service Act. The resentment it has created is known to this House, members of which are known to regret that the elements of the constitution were ignored in this proceeding; and that the method of presenting a practically executed decree, while withholding disclosure of the facts on which it may be based, cannot easily be justified to the constituents of a newly-elected parliament.

The curtailment of the liberty of written and spoken speech, contained in the Order in Council given to the public on April 16th has caused especial concern to all who are aware of the history of free discussion in Canada and other parts of the British Empire. We are sure we need not beg the House to examine its provisions in order to appreciate how a doctrine of the essential infallibility of the Government may be forced upon a free people on pain of a fine of five thousand dollars and five years' imprisonment. The House, to our extreme regret, has been faced with a notification of the intended curtailment of the privilege of a member of Parliament to declare his mind, and the right of his constituents to know what he has uttered. That this unique warning to a freely-elected British assembly was halted for several weeks on the Order Paper, we venture respectfully to attribute to you, Mr. Speaker, as the appointed guardian of the liberties of the House and also of the people. It has been noted that the Prime Minister, in withdrawing the measure, viewed with so much apprehension from outside the House, announced that it is likely to be reintroduced next session.

Perhaps the House may not be offended to learn that cognizance has also been taken of a notice issued to it within the last week to the effect that it must curtail its discussion of vital national affairs, and withdraw from its precincts within a few days, or be summoned hither during the hottest and most inconvenient month of the year. That such a direction should be issued without apparent recourse to the judgment of the House causes reflective citizens to wonder what has happened to the freedom Canadian institutions have hitherto enjoyed.

Mr. Speaker, and gentlemen of the House of Commons, the disquiet of the country of which we are the humble and inadequate exponents and which demonstrates sadly the increasing dangers to our national unity, which, if we lose it, we shall have lost all indeed, cannot be allayed by a persistence in the course we have so imperfectly sketched.

Will the House permit us, with much deference, but much earnestness too, to repeat the reminder of one of its members that the Government is a committee of this House vested with the executive powers of Parliament. The responsibility of government, therefore, is ultimately upon this House. Nothing appears to have been done to make the position of members

Hon. Mr. CLORAN.