

of the people may be freely put forward and discussed, and, from time to time, crystallized into legislation and given effect to. The purpose of these amendments is that discussion shall be restricted, and that members of this House, coming here from all parts of Canada and representing the interests of all the people of the country, are, in respect of debate, to be subject to such limitations and restrictions as may express the will of the Government of the day. It is a proposal to change a free Parliament into a dictatorship; to change free discussion into a mere assent to propositions laid down. Parliament has, up to the present time, been the clearing house for the thought of the people of Canada; hereafter it is to be a place where the will of the Government of the day is to be registered, with or without discussion, as may suit the head of the Administration. This is surely a radical change, which should not be made without good and sufficient reason, or without due and thoughtful consideration. What reason is there for projecting such a radical change, not only into the proceedings of this Parliament, but into the political relations of the people of this country? It would have been reasonable to suppose that such a radical proposition would have been made only after the fullest consideration, and after every opportunity for discussion, amendment and improvement; but we find that immediately after the resolution is proposed by the Premier, a motion is made by the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, by which the House is compelled to accept or reject this proposal as first introduced, with the least possible amount of discussion or consideration. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is that fair play to the people of Canada? Is it right that the expression of views in this free Parliament should be restricted by this resolution at the mandate of the right hon. Prime Minister, backed by his majority in this House?

What reason is there, in the occurrences during the life of this Parliament, to warrant such a course? Has there been delay of public business? I venture to say that in the Parliament of no other country has the public business been transacted with greater regard to the saving of time and to fair discussion and consideration than during the late and present sessions. This restriction of the liberty of debate, this limitation of the right of free speech in Parliament, is based upon the attitude of the Opposition to a single measure proposed by the Government. In regard to no other portion of the public business has there been anything but prompt consideration, and, in regard to the naval question itself, so long as that question was before the House, there was only that fair consid-

eration and discussion which its importance and far-reaching consequences warranted. It was only when the naval question ceased to be the question before the House and the rights and privileges of the House were placed in issue that there was any action that could be construed as obstruction. There was no obstruction to legislation, but there was the defence of obstruction against coercion. Up to the passing of the resolution there was debate by both sides of the House. The votes on the resolution and the second reading of the Bill were reached by agreement between leaders of the two sides of the House. It was only when the Bill came into committee and when the Government, without bringing down information that was properly demanded undertook to say that this House must sit in continuous session until the second clause was passed, that any action was taken that could be construed as obstruction. I say that an Opposition of eighty-six members in a House of two hundred and twenty, representing within a small fraction as many people in this country as the Government majority, would certainly have been doing very much less than their duty to the people who sent them here if they had not met the attempted coercion by obstruction.

Let me call your attention to the occurrences in connection with this Naval Bill, a question that everyone will admit to be of far-reaching importance. It involves inter-Imperial relationships beyond any question and an amount of money sufficiently large to startle the taxpayers of Canada. Instead of the Government of the day coming forward with facts and arguments and reasons in support of the proposition to which they asked the assent of this House, their first move was to apply closure to their supporters. That act of theirs made it impossible for the country to learn what the position of the Government really was. I venture to say that in no other parliament was such a position ever taken by a government on such a question. No other government ever dared to defy parliamentary propriety and constitutional usage to such an extent as to gag their followers in debate instead of welcoming the opportunity to place before the people of Canada whatever reasons there may have been for the proposal that they were submitting. The fact that the Government refused to disclose its position or allow its followers to disclose their position necessarily laid upon the members of the Opposition, whose duty as members of this House it was to bring to the attention of the country whatever merits or demerits there might be in the proposal, an obligation to debate this measure fully. Notwithstanding that attitude of the Govern-

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