

Fielding) thought for a moment that I did not know that the Northwest could hardly have as much need for harbours and piers as those provinces on the sea-coast. His suggestion on that point was again one of the little effective things used in the debating school; but he must have been smiling inwardly when he used it against me on this occasion in the House of Commons.

Now, with reference to the militia question, I am willing to say that probably it is not one member's business to criticise another member for not being in the House and attending to his duty. Probably we had better all leave that to the constituents of each member. It may be that, in that, I transgressed the rule of good taste and proper debate. I am ready to subscribe to the general principle that, if the constituency will not take care of its member in that respect, it is not much use for me to bother my head about him. As to the papers themselves, everything the hon. Minister of Militia (Sir Frederick Borden) has said about the papers being called for, about his communication with me, and about the papers being brought down, is perfectly true.

Those things took place. There is, I admit, an excuse, perhaps, for the policy of the departments being delayed. But after all the delay, we have not got a final answer. But that is not to say that the Minister of Militia was not looking for that final answer, and that we would not have been pleased to get the final answer. So I have done about as well as I could with reference to these two things. I am glad the Minister of Militia has an abiding sense of my technical military administration; so we will cry quits now and wait till the next case comes up. The Minister of Finance says it is the privilege of an opposition to say foolish things. Out of the experience of the heart the mouth speaketh. It does not need my friend's old colleague and former co-worker, who has lately been elevated to a seat on the bench which I hope he may long live to adorn—it does not need his classical expression to be brought to the mind of my hon. friend to-day to quicken that sense of the foolishness of an opposition, to the effect that the gentlemen who at present occupy the government benches did talk a lot of unmitigated rot during the time they were in opposition.

Now with reference to shortening the session. I do not know of any insuperable difficulty in the way of the suggestions that was made by the leader of the opposition, from being carried out. I daresay when they come to be thought over some objections will crop up that we do not think of at present. But there cannot be any good reason to prevent this House from meeting in those months of the year which are the least disadvantageous to business men, and

Mr. FOSTER.

more pleasant for the work of the session. I believe that will be found somewhere between November and March or April. An objection that always has been brought up when that time was mooted, was the intervention of the Christmas holidays. But it is easy to have a short intermission and then to get back. My experience is this, I will give it for what it is worth to the Prime Minister, he may have more of it and richer than I have had, because I have never been Prime Minister—my experience is this, that the session will, as a rule, be long or short in proportion to the preparation made by the ministers themselves for the business, as they are prompt in their work, and keep their hand continually on the business and push it through. If the members of a Prime Minister's cabinet do not exercise diligence to get their work in order as they ought, you will never shorten the session, it will dawdle on, and in the end it will result in what so many of our sessions do result in. One golden rule for a Prime Minister—I do not know whether the present Prime Minister put it into execution or not—is this: The cabinet minister who does not come up to time and have his estimates prepared when they ought to be prepared, and his work ready for the House when it ought to be ready, fire him. If that were the rule and stuck to, you would either have a great disappearance of cabinet ministers from this government, or you would have prompter business and short sessions. But is it not reasonable to think that if the sensible leader of a government and the sensible leader of an opposition were to put their heads together in order to get business carried on promptly and efficiently, they could reduce the length of the sessions of this parliament to four or five months, at the very furthest?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I will try to do my share.

Mr. FOSTER. No doubt my hon. friend the leader of the opposition will also do his share. I have no doubt the Prime Minister will try to do his share, but I have much doubt with reference to some of his ministers. I am afraid some of them are procrastinators, the Minister of Customs for instance. Now I have no desire to press my motion. I introduced it in order to call the attention of the House, of the government and of the country to what I consider an abuse, to what is admitted to be an abuse, and if it would conserve in any way a better arrangement for the future, I think I should press my motion to the point of a vote. But I am willing to withdraw it after what has been said, and let it go as an expression of our opinion, so far as the principle is concerned, of the necessity for the estimates and the business being brought down more promptly in order that the sessions may be made as short as pos-