

before the session opened. My hon. friend the leader of the Opposition also complains of the bill of fare, and he says that it is very slim. Well then, the members of the House will be kept less time away from their ordinary business, and to that extent the gravity of the hon. gentleman's complaint is modified. It is not the invariable practice of the Opposition to facilitate in any extraordinarily generous manner the business of the House, if it is to their party and political interests to keep it in session. It is not a fact that the House has been invariably called together in the early months of the year. A look at the dates from 1867 down will show that the months of March and April play no inconsiderable part in the dates on which a Parliament has been called; but I do know of instances in which Parliament has been called together much earlier than this, and yet has sat on into the hot days of July and August before the members were permitted to return home to attend to their private business. Therefore, if we are here at this date, we are here under the reasons of which I have spoken, and not on account of the fanciful reasons of my hon. friend (Mr. Laurier) that we could have no mind of our own, and that we were balancing as between the better prospects of going to the country without a session or having a session without first going to the country. My hon. friend (Mr. Laurier) says that it would possibly be an unthinkable thing that the Government should have a mind of its own, and he attributes the lateness of the session to the instability of the Government in making up its mind. Well, I may say to my hon. friend that if it were unfortunately true that we had no minds of our own and could not make up our minds, we should find ourselves in very good company, for I have a suspicion that my hon. friend (Mr. Laurier) has put himself in that category very often within the last few years. And I am not sure, that from anything he has said yet on the important question, upon which he last dilated, he has had during the last three or four years, any mind of his own. If he has he has taken precious good care to let no person else know what that mind may be. My hon. friend was very crafty in getting out of the necessity of having, as the leader of his party, a mind of his own and expressing it, by saying that it was an unheard of thing that he should be asked to advise the advisers of His Excellency. Well, we do not wish him to do that. For many long years he has not done it except across the floor. For many long years to come, we hope, he will not be in the coveted position of advising His Excellency upon the current affairs of the country. As to that we may have different views, according to the side of the House upon which sit; but there is one thing certain, that in every constitutionally governed

Mr. FOSTER.

country, and in this Dominion, the electorate might reasonably expect that the hon. gentleman would advise his constituents, his party and the electorate of this country as to what are his views on a great public question. We will allow the hon. gentleman for many years to come to do without advising the advisers of His Excellency; but we do ask him to make up his mind upon this and sundry other questions, and advise the people of Canada just where he stands, and where his party stands. Sir, the hon. gentleman spoke of the trade issue; he rang the changes upon the iniquity of protection; he declared that it was the root of all evil; he said that it destroyed the farming interests of this country particularly. But when the hon. gentleman came down from these definite maledictions, and began to talk about what the remedy should be, how delightfully indefinite he became. I appeal to gentlemen on this side of the House, I appeal to gentlemen on that side of the House, I appeal to 'Hansard' and the readers of 'Hansard,' if they can make out from the few sentences with which he finished his tirade against protection, as to his panacea for the ills of the country, if they could take the prescription which he gave to any political druggist and have it made up in a form in which it could be given to the body politic. My hon. friend, instead of plunging all at once into the heavy political questions of the day, which he said the mover and the seconder of the Address had slighted, indulged in a good deal of persiflage with reference to the position of the advisers of His Excellency and the amusing incidents which he assured us are taking place and have from time to time been taking place in the Council chamber and elsewhere. He made allusion to wars and fighting that were going on between two factions in the Cabinet. I can assure my hon. friend that though he imagines there have been wars, and that there are two factions, and that there has been fighting, so far as I am concerned, I have escaped without a scar or a scratch—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. FOSTER. And, looking around on the healthy and serene faces of my colleagues, I think they can say the same for themselves. My hon. friend has one fault: he is too imaginative. I have no doubt that in certain adverse political situations, when no great satisfaction can be derived from the actualities, it is a great help to my hon. friend to have a strong imagination and to be able to soar away from the sordid and not very pleasant realities into the regions of airy fancy where he may disport himself at his pleasure. I remember that the hon. gentleman lately engaged in such a flight in the city of Toronto, where, happening to read a paper in the afternoon and making a speech in the evening, and having seen in the paper that my humble self had been