

am not prepared to agree to the motion, I think if it were to be generally understood that parliament would meet about the last week in January or the first week of February, I would be quite prepared for my part to agree to such an understanding.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN (Halifax). I was under the impression that the late date at which parliament had been called this year was no doubt to some extent due to the illness of the right hon. gentleman, and for that reason I made no reference to it in the debate on the Address.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Mr. BORDEN (Halifax). However, I want to say to my right hon. friend that he is mistaken in his dates when he refers to the opening of parliament since his administration came into power. On one occasion we met here on the 6th of March, and on two other occasions we met in the later part of February, instead of the first week of February. If my right hon. friend looks up the record he will find that his government has departed more from what he calls the tacit law, than he now imagines. It is very desirable in the interest of all of us that parliament should begin its work as early as possible after the first of the year, and I see no reason why it should not do so, considering that all departments of government are well supplied with an efficient staff, that the public accounts should be made up, and that the government if it gives proper attention to the business of the country should be ready to meet parliament at the beginning of the year; to the uninitiated member of parliament it does seem a mystery why year after year the opening of parliament is delayed until the middle or end of February or the first week of March. When we do commence parliament early in the year, it has come under the observation of every gentleman that there has been a great waste of time during almost every session since 1896 because the government is not ready with its business. It seems to me that it only requires ordinary business methods and intelligence to remedy this, and that in future at least members of parliament should not be subjected to the inconvenience of late sessions, and to delay because of the unreadiness of the government when there is an early session. My right hon. friend refers to the readiness of the government to proceed with business at the present time. I readily admit that the government went into Supply very early this session, but a number of important measures have been referred to in the speech from the Throne and we have yet no intimation from the government as to the date at which some of the most important of them will be brought down. I would remind the Prime Minister that in 1896 he laid down the doctrine that the redress of grievances such as

is sought in some of these measures was a condition precedent to any Supply being granted. I would suggest to him that it would only be fair to the House, and particularly to this side of the House who have to fill the role of critics, that we should have these measures before us at an early date. I see no reason why the papers with regard to the Alaskan boundary should not have been laid on the Table on the first day the House met. The right hon. gentleman told us in the debate on the Address that they would be brought down at once, but they are not down yet. When they are brought down they should be printed and that will cause further delay. Then, the correspondence promised respecting negotiations with the colony of Newfoundland should be brought down at once and I would suggest that they should be printed and placed in the hands of members. If these things were done it would facilitate business. Then, the only information we have had up to the present time with regard to the colonial conference is that which some of us have been able to obtain from the blue-book issued by the imperial government. This Canadian government has given no information whatever as to the attitude of the Canadian representatives at the conference, and I can well believe that there is some information which the Canadian government desires to give to the House and to the country which is not contained in the imperial blue-book. In any case that blue-book is not available to all members of parliament as it should be, nor is it available for the public who want to know about the proceedings at that conference.

There is one matter which is touched upon very lightly indeed in the blue-book issued by the imperial government, but which is of great importance to this country, and that is the correspondence and negotiations which took place between the representatives of this and the imperial governments with regard to the embargo on our cattle. I had not the pleasure of being present in the House yesterday, but I understand that in the debate on this subject it was suggested that the matter had better be discussed after the papers are brought down. But why were not the papers placed on the Table the very first day of the session? It was said, I understand, that the Postmaster General had had some negotiations with Mr. Hanbury. Why were those papers not on the Table when the session opened? It is matters of this kind that tend to delay the business of the House, and in regard to which the government might make a very great improvement on the methods they have pursued in the past.

As to the particular date which has been selected by my hon. friend from Macdonald (Mr. Boyd), I dare say that it might suit some members very well and not suit others so well. There is probably no conceivable date which will absolutely suit every mem-

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.