

was on this side of the House and I trust that he will not forget that while he and his party are on that side of the House at the present time the day may come, and it is sure to come, when they will be on this side of the House. It is the duty of any government in legislating to bear in mind what are the best interests of the country and to so conduct the public affairs. Now, it is not necessary for me to remind the right hon. gentleman of the great disadvantage that the people coming from the more remote parts of Canada suffer in this connection. Coming here thousands of miles and being kept here in all probability four or five months to a very great number of men, as the right hon. gentleman knows, it means financial ruin, and I call upon the right hon. gentleman, considerate as he usually is, to bear that fact in mind. It is all very well for those members of parliament whose homes are within a hundred miles of Ottawa in Ontario and Quebec, who leave here every Friday evening, go home to their business, stay there Saturday and Sunday, and come back on Monday, but the members who are 2,000 or 3,000 miles from home—what about these gentlemen? Should they not be considered? The majority are here and to that extent they rule, but I wish to warn the government and the members of this House that the day is not far distant when this condition will be reversed. I do not think it is necessary that I should say any more. I am not submitting this question, as I think my remarks will show, in any party sense, or in the hope of obtaining any party advantage. I am submitting it in a fair and impartial manner and I leave it to the judgment of the House if I have asked for anything unreasonable. The date I have suggested, I think, is a reasonable one and a great deal of business could be done at a season when very few people are busy. The business of the House should be well moved up at the holidays, and an adjournment had for a reasonable time allowing us to get back to our business. It should not be as it has been in the past, ruinous to many men who have spent some years in this House.

The PRIME MINISTER (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier). I do not find fault with the observations which have fallen from my hon. friend (Mr. Boyd) though he will pardon me if I take exception, not so much to his statements as to the innuendos they contain. There has been a tacit law in this House existing for a great many years, that parliament should meet towards the end of January or perhaps the first week of February, but not at the period mentioned in the motion. This tacit law was at one time more honoured in the breach than in the observance, but the present government has observed it within all reasonable possibility. If the record of this government is examined it will be found that this is the first year

in which parliament was summoned at a later period than the first week of February, which is the period, generally understood at which parliament should open. This year parliament was summoned at a much later period which I will frankly admit must be a great inconvenience to the members generally. The departments are not responsible for this; the Auditor General is not responsible for it, but I myself am responsible and I throw myself upon the indulgence of the House. Circumstances to which I need not refer compelled me to be absent not only from the capital but from the Dominion for the best part of the month of November, all December, and part of January. I came back from the south about the 10th of January and it was not then possible to summon parliament at the usual period. I repeat that I am alone responsible. I was in such a condition that I could not attend to business. As soon as I came back we applied ourselves diligently to work. Parliament was summoned, and I can claim, I think that at no period was the business of the government so complete and so ready as it was this year for the consideration of members when parliament opened. In this way we endeavoured to atone for what was certainly a departure from the rule which has been observed in the past and which ought to be well recognized. For my part I have no objection that the calling of the session at the end of January or the first of February should be a well recognized law of parliament, but in the speech of Mr. Blake quoted by my hon. friend, Mr. Blake admitted that there may be some cases in which an exception might take place, and I think that the members of the House on both sides will perhaps admit that this year, at all events, there was some reasonable ground for the government departing from the well understood rule. But, if we are to have a rule of the House to regulate the opening of the session of parliament, I am not prepared to accept the period which the hon. gentleman has mentioned in his motion, namely the last week in November. I doubt very much if this would be acceptable to the great majority of the people of Canada. The motion has been seconded by a friend of mine (Mr. Stewart) and I may with safety conclude that the period suggested in it would be acceptable to the people west of Lake Superior. I doubt very much if that period would meet with the approval of the people of the east of Lake Superior. Taking it all in all I think that the understanding that parliament should be summoned at the end of January or the first week in February would best accommodate all the people of this vast Dominion. There is such a variety of climates in our great country, which to some extent regulate the opening of the business seasons in different parts of the Dominion at different periods of the year, that it would be impossible to accommodate all members exactly. While I