

wish that on a subject of this kind which concerns very directly all the members of this House, there would have been a general discussion of the views advanced by the hon. member for Renfrew (Mr. A. A. Wright). The rule to which he has objected is certainly open to reasonable exception, but this rule has the prestige of observance for an almost unprecedented number of years; it has secular sanction. It has been the rule in England for many generations, and I think it is still the rule there, although there is a certain tacit understanding that the House is not to sit beyond a certain hour.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. They have the 12 o'clock rule, but it is frequently suspended.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Yes, I believe it is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. At all events of late years we have practically adopted the rule suggested by my hon. friend (Mr. A. A. Wright). It is very seldom during late years, especially in the earlier part of the session, that we have sat later than 11 o'clock, or occasionally 12 o'clock. Towards the end of the session when we are all anxious to be relieved from our duties we all put on a little extra pressure and we sit sometimes pretty late; but for my part I have been brought up, if I may say so, under the rule of Sir John Macdonald, who was quite an authority not only on politics but on many other things; and he always adhered to the present rule. My hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) I think will remember that although appeals of a similar nature were made in former times, Sir John never favoured them, but rather adhered to the present rule which has been maintained.

Mr. FOSTER. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I think that on the whole it is as well to leave the rule as it is and to have a mutual understanding that we should conclude our sessions between 11 and 12 o'clock. When there is danger of a very late sitting, as happens sometimes, then the two sides of the House might agree to adjourn at a reasonable hour. It is very true that we lead a strenuous life; my hon. friend has spoken of this House as a great manufactory of words, and in this manufactory of words we do not know or observe the eight-hour law. We work very strenuously, for all we are worth, for seven months in the year, and it is unfortunately injuring the health of many of us. If my opinion is to count for anything, I would rather leave the rule as it is, and have the understanding I have just spoken of, that at this stage of the session and for several months, until we come to the closing days of the session, we should not sit later than 12 o'clock and should usually adjourn at 11 o'clock. The rules of the House were carefully revised

only two years ago, and I believe that the work done then by members on both sides of the House was well done. The new rules seem to be satisfactory. In these we have an experiment, having the House meet at 2 o'clock on Wednesdays and rise at 6. So far as my observation goes the rule has worked satisfactorily, giving more leisure to members and a good deal of work has been despatched in the four hour sittings. If that innovation is confirmed and continued, perhaps we may find this an example to follow and extend it also to some other days. Undoubtedly it will be far preferable if we can work during the day time and have leisure in the evening, but if we are to despatch the business of the House, I am afraid we will have to do as we have done, work not only in the day time, but also to some extent at night. My hon. friend (Mr. A. A. Wright) has brought up a subject which is worthy of attention; he has handled it in a very felicitous manner, and I would request him now not to proceed further but to allow his motion to be withdrawn.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN (Carleton, Ont.) Before the motion is withdrawn, I would like to say that I think the thanks of the House are due to the hon. gentleman (Mr. A. A. Wright) for bringing the subject before the House. It seems to me that in matters of procedure such as this custom counts for a great deal, and it does seem singular that in the American Congress they transact the business of the great republic to the south without sitting in the evening, while we in Canada are obliged to sit until 11, 12 or sometimes 2, 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, in order to accomplish ours. It is perhaps due very largely to habits of the past, to the customs of the House, to methods of procedure, but I should not despair of seeing the reform which has been advanced today by our friend (Mr. A. A. Wright) accomplished. If it could be brought about without any serious interference with public business, it would be a great reform indeed. It has been adopted in Great Britain under what is called the 12 o'clock rule, but as the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) has very well observed, in Great Britain it is found necessary, I think, to suspend the 12 o'clock rule frequently, especially as the session approaches its conclusion. If it were possible to have the government entirely reasonable with regard to its measures—and I rather despair of that good result so long as the government is constituted as it is at present—and if the opposition should continue to be as reasonable in the future as it has been in the past—and I am sure that it will—some reform like this might be brought about. Criticism could be put into a more concise form, the government could bring down its measures in good time and we perhaps could accomplish as much before 10.30 at night