

must claim our attention for some months to come.

Some years ago, an agitation was started in both branches of the legislature with the view of fixing a date for the annual meeting of parliament, but it was dropped on the promise of the government of the day that earlier meetings would be the rule in the future. It was said it would be contrary to British precedent to fix by law the date of the opening of parliament. I am a strong admirer of British precedents generally, but in this instance I think we can get a better precedent in the constitutional rule that prevails in the United States. The time for the meeting of congress is fixed for the first week in December. But even in England, where no date is fixed by law, parliament meets as a rule early in February—this year a little later owing probably to the prolonged autumnal session of 1902. In Great Britain we never hear of such flimsy excuses as are offered in this country for not calling parliament for the dispatch of business at the proper time. If it were attempted in that country—if the public were told that owing to the unpreparedness of ministerial measures parliament could not be convened at the most suitable season of the year, the excuse would not be considered satisfactory. Such an excuse would be looked upon as indicative of incapacity or want of industry on the part of ministers, or wilful neglect of their departmental duties. We are told boastfully that the departmental reports are all ready for submission to the parliament, as if this were something very creditable to the government, nearly nine months after the closing of the fiscal year. With the fiscal closing on the 30th of June, why should not the departmental reports be ready by the 1st of January? We have less than six millions of people to legislate for. England has over forty millions in the British Isles alone, and the great republic nearly eighty millions, but yet parliament and congress meet with almost equal regularity every year. More work and less play is a motto that might be adopted with great advantage to the public by the present government. Before leaving this subject, I would ask the friends of the administration in this House to use their influence to secure earlier meetings of par-

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liament, and thus avoid the necessity of bringing this subject to the notice of the Senate.

The most gratifying item in His Excellency's speech is that which refers to the general prosperity of Canada at which we can all rejoice without distinction of party. The toll of the husbandman has been rewarded everywhere with abundant crops; trade and commerce have been prosperous all over the Dominion; the development of our mines and minerals has added largely to the national wealth, and our fisheries have been fairly remunerative during the past year. But in these respects we have only been sharers in the good times that have prevailed on this continent. Were our fixed policy what it ought to be—a thorough going policy of protection, our prosperity and progress would be even far in advance of what they are to-day. Had the opposition pledges of the Liberal party been consistently adhered to when they attained power—had the national policy which that party had for so many years denounced as legalized robbery been abolished—had protection to our manufacturing industries been extirpated root and branch, as we were told would be done, the old provinces of Canada, which owe so much of their prosperity to those industries, would now be in a most deplorable condition—notwithstanding the good times everywhere else prevailing on this continent. But the government did not venture to put their free trade principles in force—they did not venture to destroy the protective policy of the Conservative party, but contented themselves with making some ill-judged alterations which only impaired the effectiveness of the National Policy of their predecessors. One of these unwise alterations was the British preference, because while it has been of very little value to Britain, it has no doubt proved more or less injurious to some Canadian interests. 'Business is business,' and why should we give a preference to the manufacturers of Great Britain in our markets, when England will give no preference to us in her markets, many Canadians find it difficult to understand. I do not know, however, that we should be too severe on the government on account of the inconsistency of their tariff