

are—to offer as a pretext, it may be that the Auditor General's report is not ready, that the public accounts are not ready, that the departmental reports are not ready? Why are they not ready? The public pays for getting them ready, and those who are in charge of government business can easily see that they are made ready in proper time for an early session of parliament. Why, Sir, every member of this House and every intelligent elector knows very well that the reason of the delay is not owing to the reports. It is more likely, Mr. Speaker, that political exigencies are the cause. It may be some by-election, or some similar excuse, of which members of this government and of past governments are well aware. Such being the case, I think the date that I have suggested is not an untimely one. If this House should meet in the last week of November the Address could be disposed of, important measures of the government could be submitted and legislation could be well advanced by the time of the Christmas holidays. The important Bills of the government could be printed and laid on the Table and hon. members could take the same with them to their homes during the recess, consider them, come back after the holidays and proceed with the business of the House in a careful and intelligent way not having their minds distracted by having their attention divided between their duties here and their private business. I may say that the views that I have given expression to here are not new to this House, and that they are not new to the Liberals of this House. I propose to quote from the leaders of the Liberal party in the past to show you that they held views very similar to those I hold at the present time, and I may add that the remarks of these gentlemen were delivered at an earlier date than the present one. I will quote from a speech delivered by the leader of the Liberal party during the session of 1886, as contained in vol. 1, page 8 of the Official Debates. The leader of the Liberal party at that time was the Hon. Mr. Blake who then said:

The first observation I have to make is one I made a session or two ago, on the same occasion; that is, to express a regret at the late period of the year at which we are discharging this, our initial duty. I express that regret with stronger feeling, because it was announced to us by the First Minister, last session, or the session before, that we were to meet earlier in the future, because we have for some years been meeting much earlier than we are now meet—

Mr. MACLEAN. What was the date of that utterance?

Mr. BOYD. February 26th, 1886. That is earlier than we are now meeting.

—and because there was a general understanding and pledge to a January meeting; I do not mean to say a pledge that was not to be broken if a great public emergency should call

Mr. BOYD.

for delay, but certainly a pledge that ought rigidly to be observed, unless there was some great emergency of which we have not heard as yet. It is to the public interest that we should meet earlier, because this is the period of the year which will best enable the legislators of the country to discharge their duty and best enable the people of the country to discharge their not unimportant part in connection with the business of legislation. As soon as the spring opens, both we and they are distracted with other things, and therefore it is a material thing for us, circumstanced as this business country is, that we should have a more distinct understanding, if such be possible, that our session should not commence at what I regard as an unreasonable time.

This was almost a month earlier than we have been called together for the present session. That is the opinion of a man whose opinions, I think, are respected even to this day. But, Mr. Speaker, I may say we have the opinion of the present right hon. leader of this House at a somewhat later date and I think Liberals will agree with me in saying that the opinions that were then expressed hold good to-day. I will now quote from 'Hansard' of 1894, Vol. 1, page 30. He was criticising the speeches of the mover and seconder of the address, Sir James Grant and Dr. Lachapelle.

Mr. MACLEAN. At what date?

Mr. BOYD. The House met on the 15th March, just three days later than it met this year. He said:

For instance, the hon. gentleman has not said a word, nor did the hon. member for Hochelaga, as to the late and inconvenient season at which parliament has been called. I am sure that this is a matter which the hon. gentlemen cannot approve. It has been the unwritten law of Canada for a great many years past, that parliament should be summoned at an early period in the year, at the latest, towards the end of January. The reason is obvious. In this country we have no privileged class. All the members of this House, with scarcely an exception, are engaged in the ordinary avocations of life, and it is an object of paramount necessity that after having discharged their duties to the country, they should be able to go back to their ordinary business pursuits, about the opening of the busy season. In years past, I say, it was the unwritten law of Canada; still, this year the government have departed from that law. They waited, and waited, and waited, until the opening of the busy season was in sight, before summoning parliament, and as to this, not a word of explanation has been offered. Why, we might have expected, at all events, that the gods who rule over our destinies would have come down from the sphere which they occupy in majesty, and give us a word of explanation.

Now, I submit these very carefully considered words to the attention of the right hon. leader of the government (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and I trust whatever action he and his government may be disposed to take in regard to this, what I consider, most important question that he will keep in remembrance the words he then uttered when he