

Their labours are not ended even when the House rises; they have to prepare the reports for publication, revise them and see that everything is all right, and they are obliged to remain here for an hour after we go home. Is this just, is it right, is it fair? should we not consider this? Let me draw attention to one other thing which I noticed particularly during the long session of 1903, and there is nothing like bringing these things down to the concrete. The deputy clerk, Mr. Laplante, had to stay here all the time during that session and the sittings were protracted every night until after midnight. The result was that at the close of the session Mr. Laplante was not able to stand upon his feet and he was told by his physician that as soon as it was possible he must get away and recuperate; it was not medicine he wanted, but rest, absolute rest. Now, have we the right to exact this from the employees of this parliament? Is there no limit to our personal liberty? Personal liberty has its limits. For example, I have the right to swing my arms in any direction; that is my personal liberty. But if I swing my arms too close to John Jones' nose my personal liberty stops there and John Jones' liberty begins. Have we the right to exact such labours from the members of this House as will render them incompetent for perhaps all the days of their lives. I say no. I think the government is to some extent responsible for this, and that they should aim to put an end to existing conditions. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention to another thing. It is said that if we should venture to do this terrible things may happen; that the session will never come to an end, that we will be here for the whole year, that there are lions in the path. Well, there may be lions in the way which 'Faint-Heart' sees, but my contention is that if you advance you will find that these lions are stuffed with straw. There is no necessity of our being frightened. If other nations of the world are able to do all their legislation during the day time surely we ought to be able to do the same. Let me point out what the legislatures of other countries do, and if they do it why not we? Are we lacking in intelligence; are we more lacking in force than are our neighbours? Surely not. In Austria, with a population of 47,000,000, the Reichsrath—both Houses—sits from October to June; the lower chamber three and four days a week from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. There are no night sittings at all and yet they are able to legislate for 47,000,000 people. In the Belgian Chamber which legislates for a population of 7,000,000 they sit four days a week from 1.45 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. and occasionally from 10.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. to expedite business. In Denmark the Folkething sits from half an hour to four and a half hours, and the Landsthing for three hours. The French Chamber of Deputies, which legislates for 40,000,000,

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usually sits from 2.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. or 7 p.m., and the Senate much the same. In Germany, where they legislate for 60,000,000 people the session of the Reichstag usually lasts from November until May, and sits from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and the Landtag follows suit. The Hungarian House of Deputies sits from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. and the House of Magnates commences at 11 a.m. In Italy they legislate for 32,000,000 people and the Senate sits from 3.30 p.m. until 6 p.m. or 6.30, and the Chamber of Deputies from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m., and sometimes 8 p.m. with occasional morning sittings. And what is the procedure in Japan, the country of the Mikado, which has sprung so suddenly into importance and which takes rank among the foremost nations of the earth. In Japan with 50,000,000 people, the Diet sits for three months each year, the House of Peers from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the House of Representatives from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. In the Netherlands the first Chamber of the States-General sits from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the second Chamber from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 4.30 p.m. If these nations are able to do their work during the day time why should not we? The Portuguese Cortes meet at 2 p.m. for a four hour sitting and the session generally last about three months. The ordinary sessions of the Spanish Senate and Congress last six hours and they legislate for 19,000,000 people. The Swedish Rikstag usually sits from January to June with morning and evening sittings. In Switzerland the sittings of the Conseils begin at 8 a.m. in summer and 9 a.m. in winter, and lasts until 1 p.m. or 1.30 p.m. And what about the United States which legislates for 90,000,000 people? There the House of Representatives meets generally at 11 a.m. and the Senate meets at noon and usually the sittings last until about 4 p.m., and only on extraordinary occasions do they have night sittings.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if all these nations are able to carry on their legislative work effectually during the day time, surely this House of Commons ought to be able to accomplish its duty by closing at 10.30 at night. And who asks for these long hours from us? Are our constituents demanding this? Is the press demanding it? Is any one asking for this? On the contrary, we know full well that many of our constituents upbraid us and ask us why it is that we keep such abominable hours. They even accuse us of choosing the darkness rather than the light because our deeds are evil. That may be true and it may not, but it is certain that nobody is exacting these hours from us except ourselves. Under these circumstances I cannot see why we cannot shorten our hours of sitting and thus add very much to the health and comfort of every member here.

Right Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). Mr. Speaker, I would