

of official reports, while very valuable for reference on important questions, is abused for the purpose of placing upon record long speeches, not with the hope of convincing those who listen to them, but for the benefit of constituents. I frankly say that I have made speeches in the House of Commons myself with that object in view, and I fancy there are others here who have taken the same course. The abolition of the official reports, would, to my mind, tend in a great measure to the shortening of the session; but experience has taught me that sessions might be shortened to a very great extent if ministers were prepared, when parliament meets, to have whatever important measures they intend to bring before parliament ready to be laid upon the table with proper explanation. I do not say that the present government are the only sinners in this respect. My hon. friends who sit opposite me, and who have had a very long experience of public life, know that that is a difficulty which presents itself to all governments; but it may be carried to such an extent as to keep parliament in perpetual session. I have noticed also that when questions are asked by the opposition to elicit from ministers the meaning or object of government measures when they are introduced, and the effect it is thought they would have upon the country if passed, that if a simple explanation be given at once it would save a great deal of discussion afterwards. I have noticed also that when matters affecting the management of departments come up and questions are asked by the opposition as to whether such and such things have occurred and whether certain difficulties have arisen that the minister who frankly says, yes, that did take place and the moment it was brought to my notice I took steps to correct it, the discussion at once ceased. I can speak of an incident which came under my own observation. My successor in the government of which I was a member was asked a simple question in the House of Commons. He thought it was a reflection upon himself and he refused to answer. I called him over and asked why he did not answer the question? He said he would not. The result

Hon. Mr. POWER.

of that was that we had three or four hours discussion on a minor question which might have been settled in five or ten minutes. That is one instance that I observed, and my remark is applicable to all governments and all ministers who are not prepared to answer frankly questions put to them by the opposition. Another great difficulty which presents itself and creates a prolongation of the sessions of parliament is when measures of a debatable or questionable character, so far as the opposition are concerned, are presented, information should be given to parliament by those who are responsible for attempting to enact such measures, and they are not frank enough, and very often information is refused which properly and legitimately should be supplied by the minister, the opposition prolong the debate until they secure the information. We have had instances of that kind many times, and never more frequently than during the present session. I am speaking from personal experience, and I think my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce will agree with me in most of the statements I have made in reference to the business of parliament. We are constantly discussing what should and should not be done. To my mind, the appointment of a committee of this kind would be impracticable. It would result in nothing. I am glad to see that the hon. senator from Wellington is becoming a thorough out and out Reformer in this particular, as he has been in others since he has had the honour of a seat in this chamber. I know of no hon. gentleman who occupied more time and covered more pages of 'Hansard' in the good old times in the past when we sat opposite each other in the House of Commons than the hon. gentleman himself. Since he has been here he has seen the folly of a policy of that kind, and is quite willing now to extend his reforms to such an extent as to affect others who are following in his illustrious footsteps while he was a member of the House of Commons. The hon. senator from Victoria, B.C., put the case in a nutshell when he said that difficulties arise from the fact that every constituency desiring legislation upon any particular question will put that business in the hands of the representative of that con-