

moreland (Mr. Powell) with respect to the Chignecto Marine Ship Railway. That discussion practically occupied the whole day, but as it came up regularly I cannot object to it. This, however, is a discussion which should have taken place on a Government day. At the present time the Government have four days out of five in the week, and surely enough time could be spared from the Government days to discuss such important questions without trenching on the time which should be occupied by private members in discussing important questions on the Order paper, forty-six in number, under the head of Notices of Motion.

More than that, there are no less than thirty items under the head of Public Bills and Orders, which could very well occupy the time of a Monday instead of the subject now under debate. It is most important that public Bills and orders should receive more time than they now receive. Instead of the time given to them being abridged by special subjects being brought forward for discussion on private members' day, the time should be enlarged, because some of the most valuable legislation enacted by Parliament has been carried by private members, who have introduced public Bills. Under the pressure of Government business it has become almost impossible for private members to reach the orders standing in their name. There is a public Bill standing in the name of the member for West Assiniboia (Mr. Davin), and a similar Bill standing in my own name, to amend the Northwest Territories Representation Act and to remove very serious defects in the law, and if these defects are to be removed before the next general election, some measure of this character must be carried through the House. For these reasons, and without desiring to occupy the time of the House, I have endeavoured briefly to state why I think it most improper for a motion of this character to be moved by a private member on private members' day, and I am very strongly impressed with the necessity of private members being allowed greater opportunity to bring forward important questions.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. I hope the hon. member for West Ontario (Mr. Edgar) will take due note of the observations which have just fallen from the hon. member for Winnipeg (Mr. Martin), which I may say I do not quite regard in the light presented by that hon. gentleman. No doubt, this is a question of very great importance indeed, and certainly the Government entertain no objection to its being raised by hon. gentlemen opposite. It is not a party question in any sense of the word, but it is one in which every hon. member is interested as being desirous that the wisest and best conclusion should be arrived at. The Government will consider this matter promptly, in view of the opinions expressed by both sides of the House, and arrive at a conclu-

sion, which they will state to the House at a very early day.

Mr. WELDON. Before the Government make up their minds, in view of the arguments addressed to the House, I will make a further argument on the question brought before our attention by the hon. member for West Ontario (Mr. Edgar), and I will have due regard to the protest entered by the hon. member for Winnipeg, because I will occupy less time in making my argument than he consumed in entering his protest. Had I not been greatly impressed by the statement made by the Minister of Justice, that his department had advised with barristers of eminence at the bars of the different provinces who expressed opinions contradictory. I would have ventured to say, Mr. Speaker, that section 50 of the British North America Act was, at all events, in the vital part of it, a very clear section. There are two parts in that section. One it seems to me, in unequivocal language declares the maximum length of Parliament. There is another part of the section not quite so clear, declaring when the parliamentary term begins. Section 50 states, however, that the maximum length of Parliament is five years and no longer. It seems to me, that it is not even arguable that Parliament can sit longer than five years. On the other part of the clause, as to when that five years term begins, there may be argument, but we are estopped in a sense by our own action. We certainly began to make laws on the 29th of April, 1891. How then possibly, can we hold that we can exercise legislative powers after the 28th day of April, 1896? On the other phase of the question, I think there is some ground for argument, although the argument seems to me to be very strongly in favour of the view taken by the hon. member (Mr. Edgar). I merely rise, Sir, to express the strong view, that this Parliament began to live on the 25th day of April, 1891, and will die by the operation of the law on the 24th day of April, 1896.

Mr. DAVIES (P.E.I.) Since this question has been first bruited, I have given some consideration to it, and I frankly confess, that had it not been for the remarks made by my hon. friend the Minister of Justice (Mr. Dickey), I would not believe the question was capable of doubt at all. I have the greatest respect for his legal opinion, and if he had committed himself to a legal opinion adversely to the one which I entertain, I would have some doubt as to whether I was right or not. But, I watched the hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickey) very carefully, and I saw he was very careful not to identify himself in any way, with any of these unknown gentlemen who entertain a doubt on the construction of this Act. Now, the hon. gentleman of course said that which we all know: That there is a glorious uncertainty about the law. Well, that does not amount to any-