

of the estimates, that he reserved his remarks upon that subject; his remarks were directed chiefly to the fact that it was in the sixth month of the session that these estimates were brought down. My hon. friend says that we should all endeavor to make the session as short as possible and I agree that we would be absolutely without any defence at all for bringing the estimates down at such a late period under ordinary circumstances, but I think we can find a very good reason for it, without attempting to take shelter behind the practice of our predecessors which I would not under any circumstances be guilty of as he well knows. I think our action can be defended upon its own merits and not upon the former delinquencies of our predecessors. My hon. friend concentrated his remarks chiefly upon two items, the estimates of the Departments of Militia and Public Works. He made some criticism with reference to the estimates for the Transcontinental Railway and the Intercolonial Railway also. The Intercolonial is one question which my hon. friend knows from experience it is difficult to deal with and I am sorry to say it is not any easier to deal with it at this time than in his time. But I may say that the estimates of the Intercolonial Railway and the Transcontinental would have been brought down earlier but the fact that the militia and public works estimates could not be brought down at an earlier stage. My hon. friend has said with regard to the militia estimates that we are inaugurating a new policy and that is very true. Since we are bringing in a new policy we must give the House an explanation of the reasons which have induced us to inaugurate this departure in our militia policy. As the Minister of Militia, who will bring up his estimates as soon as we go into Committee of Supply, will explain, this matter has been engaging the attention of the government for some time; our mind has been made up for two, three, or even five or six months but we have been corresponding with the imperial authorities to have their final answer as to the proposed policy and I do not know if up to this moment we have received the final answer we are expecting. The Minister of Militia informs me we have not. This has been the reason why we did not bring the matter up before, but finding that the despatches which we expected from the imperial government on this subject to complete the correspondence have not yet come to hand we thought it advisable to take parliament at once into our confidence and explain to them the policy we intend to initiate. This is the reason why we waited before bringing up this matter.

With regard to the estimates of the Department of Public Works, my hon. friend is aware that estimates for this class of work are prepared during the session: the supplementary estimates for the Department of Public Works are always prepared

during the session. I need not call the attention of the House to the fact that when we met, the minister in charge of that department was not in his seat; he was away for his health and although we expected that he would soon return to his usual work we were unfortunately disappointed in that expectation. The new minister therefore had to be appointed and to go to his constituents to be elected, which took up four weeks of his time. Under such circumstances the estimates of the Department of Public Works could not be proceeded with. These circumstances, I think, fully explain the delay in preparing the estimates of the Department of Public Works. It seems to me this explanation should be sufficient to satisfy my hon. friend that there is good reason for bringing down the supplementary estimates so late this year.

I may say to my hon. friend that I am as anxious as he is that we should expedite the work of the session and put a stop to the inordinately long sessions of late years. If our hon. friends opposite are willing to join hands with us, and I am very glad to hear the leader of the opposition express his readiness, we ought to have earlier sessions and short sessions. I think we can find ways and means of devising shorter sessions than we have had. The suggestion which has been made by the leader of the opposition with regard to an earlier summoning of parliament is one that has much to commend itself to our judgment. Some two years ago, if I remember rightly, the idea was thrown across the House by a gentleman who is no longer a member of the House, Mr. Boyd of Manitoba, that we should meet in November instead of after New Year's, that is that we should meet before New Year's instead of after New Year's. For my part that is a suggestion in which I altogether concur. I think we could do nothing better than to have it understood by the unwritten law of parliament that this House should be summoned to meet say in the first or second week in November with an adjournment at Christmas, and then go on with the session's work. We would then have a possibility of closing before Easter. I do not think we can do that next session because it will require some preliminary work. First of all we will have to change the fiscal year. That I know is a matter which has engaged the attention of the Minister of Finance for some time, and he looks upon it favourably and it can be absolutely anticipated. There is another reason why we cannot meet early this fall, that is because, as was announced by the Minister of Finance, a commission of inquiry is to sit with regard to the tariff.

But if we cannot meet early next fall, we can meet early after New Year's, and if we do, we can take another step which will make it possible to meet in November, 1906. Such being the motive which impels both sides of the House, I think we can con-