

literal statement of my hon. friend from Hants (Mr. Russell) who expressed himself as follows:—

It may well be that no more differences of opinion could have inspired the ferocity of his attack upon his former leader, or betrayed him into the mistake of sneering at the man whom this country delights to honour, and whose shoe latches the hon. gentleman might well consider himself honoured in being permitted to unloose.

Well, I suppose that my right hon. friend the prime minister, having placed all these considerations fairly and fully before Mr. Blair, must sum it all up in this way: In view of all this you are an eminently proper person to appoint as the chairman of this high judicial tribunal which shall deal perhaps more than any tribunal in the country with the rights and even with the lives of the people. This, I suppose, must have been the interview which took place between these two hon. gentlemen; at least, if I have not correctly interpreted the interview it would be well that my right hon. friend should explain to the country what did take place, what led to this appointment. In the absence of this explanation, I believe the people regard it as a somewhat extraordinary and even painful episode in public affairs that the government, after the expressions of opinion by Mr. Blair regarding them and after their expressions of opinion in respect of him, should have appointed him to this high position of trust and confidence which so directly concerns the welfare of this country. Mr. Speaker, I apologize to you and to the members of this House, for having so long delayed them and I take my seat trusting that my right hon. friend will be able to give that explanation to the House which will set at rest all these disquieting rumours which have so much disturbed the people of this country.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). Mr. Speaker, even though my hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. Borden, Halifax) endeavoured, upon one subject to which he reverted more than once during his speech, to be a little sarcastic, I do not think that after all I can find serious fault as to the manner of his delivery nor even as to the matter thereof even though I have to take exception upon some of the points which he endeavoured to make. Let me, in the first instance, refer to one criticism, not of very much importance, but to which, at all events, it is just as well to give a moment's attention here and now; that is to say, to the summoning of parliament at a rather late season. My hon. friend has asked us why was not parliament summoned earlier. I think I can give to my hon. friend on this subject some very obvious and adequate reasons. The word 'adequate' is one as to which there has been a good deal of discussion, but I think it has more precision in my mouth than it has

in his when it is applied to his own favourite doctrine of protection. My hon. friend remembered that last year parliament was also summoned somewhat late and for reasons which I gave at that time, reasons which do not exist to-day, because I have to say frankly that on that occasion it was due to the state of my health, whereas, on the contrary, I am happy to say that I cannot set down that reason at the present time. Let me say in passing that I have to thank my hon. friend for the kind reference which he made to that matter and I congratulate him upon the fact that in the discharge of the duties which are incumbent upon him he always manages to do so with a proper regard to the amenities of our parliamentary system. My hon. friend remembered that last year we were summoned somewhat late. An intimation came to us from the other side of the House that if we were to present certain measures the session must be protracted for a pretty long time and that if these measures were persisted in before we were allowed to separate the snow would again cover the hill tops. I may say to my hon. friends that they were as good as their word. They kept their pledge. They always keep their pledges—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. In matters of obstruction.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Hear, hear.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. When the day of prorogation came, and in fact, the snow whitened the tops of the hills and if we had remained a few weeks longer it would have also whitened the vales. Five months have not yet elapsed since the day of prorogation. My hon. friends should allow us some time to breathe. The members of this House, generally, are men of business. They have to earn their living, to attend to their own avocations and five months is not too long for the members of this House to attend to their own affairs before being called again to discharge the business of the country. I apprehend from what my hon. friend has said that it may be that the length of this session called at this moment may carry us into the season when members of this House would perhaps be better employed at their own business. There is a way, however, by which we can correct any inconvenience that may arise from the late summoning of parliament and that is by preparing for an early closing of it. If my hon. friend will not act altogether upon the reproach which he made to my hon. friend from North Ontario (Mr. Grant), if the speeches are not too long, if the floodgates of eloquence are kept under control, perhaps we may expect that this House shall not have a session of eight months, not even a session of five months, but that we may prorogue in time so that all of us may go to the country and enjoy the pure air in the leafy month of June.