

plementary estimate. Does the Finance Minister take the estimates of all these departments and bundle them before Council and bring them down to the House, or does he exercise any discrimination. Has he laid any restriction upon the various departments? Has he exercised his judgment and criticism upon each one of these items, as it is the duty of a Minister of Finance to do in his capacity as guardian of the public treasury? I do not know whether he has done so or not, but I do venture to think that the estimates as they have been brought down do not justify the belief that the Finance Minister has in this respect done his duty.

The session has been prolonged and has reached a period in the summer when members on both sides are very unwilling to remain here—government supporters are willing to remain for the purpose of voting and the members on this side are unwilling to remain for the purpose of criticism. If the session is protracted very much longer I do not know how we can expect the members to remain and attend to public business. I would bring to the attention of the Prime Minister the fact that certain legislation was promised four years ago but never enacted. I refer to the promise then made that there would be a provision inserted in the statutes with regard to the attendance of members of parliament in his House. The lack of attendance during this session has been very disgraceful. There are men in this House who have not shown up to perform their public duty for more than ten days or twelve or fifteen days and that practice is becoming very prevalent. I venture to think that some such measure as that which was discussed four years ago should be placed upon the statute-book without delay. I have already mentioned to some members of the government a suggestion which I will take the liberty of repeating: We might with very great advantage begin the sessions of parliament earlier than we do. In Canada, there are roughly speaking two seasons: the late autumn, winter and early spring season in which little business is transacted by nine-tenths of the people; it is so to speak the leisure season. Then there is the season of spring, summer and early autumn which is the busy season for the great majority of our people. Since I came to parliament in 1896, occasionally the session commenced in January, a few times in February, and at other times in March. It has occasionally ended as early as the middle of May, but the session of 1903 extended until the 24th of October, after occupying a period of 7 months and 12 days. The difficulty about beginning the session earlier, as I understand from the remarks of ministers, particularly of the Minister of Finance, is that our fiscal year ends on June 30 and that the various departments cannot get their reports and accounts ready for parliament earlier than about the middle of January

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or the first week in February. Is there any special reason why we should not change our fiscal year, making it end on March 31st, as in England, instead of June 30? Does the minister say there is?

Mr. FIELDING. No, there is very much to be said in favour of it.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I understood that Sir Richard Cartwright when Minister of Finance between 1875 and 1878 attempted some movement of that kind. I do not know that of my own knowledge. I would suggest that the government should take into earnest consideration the project of changing the financial year, making it end on March 31 instead of June 30. If you did that what would follow? You could begin the session of parliament early in November and every one of the departments would have a month more after the close of the fiscal year to prepare for the work of parliament than if we begin early in January under present conditions. If you did that you could always bring the session to an end by the 1st of April or 1st of May at the outside. I do not profess to know every thing or even to know very much about the possibility of doing this, but it strikes me it might be done and so we could begin our public duties here in the early part of November and continue those public duties during a portion of the year when there is very little business engaging the majority of people in this country, we would accomplish two good results: In the first place we would be utilizing the time of the people when it is not otherwise occupied and in the next place we could, I believe, undoubtedly bring into public life in this country representative men from all parts of Canada who shrink at the present time from undertaking public duties, and we all know that is a very desirable thing from the standpoint of either side of the House. I venture to make this suggestion now because I might not have an opportunity of doing so before the end of the session. I sincerely trust that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and their colleagues will take the matter into consideration because it is becoming absolutely unbearable that we should, year after year, spend our summers here in the city of Ottawa attending to public business which it seems to me might just as well be transacted at a much more convenient season.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. With reference to the remarks made by the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) and the motion with which he has concluded I have only this to observe at the present moment: I agree that we have brought down the supplementary estimates rather late in the session and that they are of considerable bulk. I understood that the hon. member's complaint was not so much as to the amount