

Mr. OLIVER. It has not been printed. It is bulky, and it is not desirable that it should be printed, unless by the order of the House.

Mr. FOSTER. It will be presented to the House?

Mr. OLIVER. Yes, if the House so wishes. The report in regard to the timber licenses, will be laid on the table within a very short time.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN (Carleton, Ont.). In this connection, I would suggest to the Prime Minister that the system of the House is not very thorough. A return may be ordered at the instance of some hon. gentlemen and it may not be brought down during that session. At the following session, the gentleman by whom the motion was made may not be a member of the House. The return may be ordered in the last session of parliament, and, it may be forgotten altogether and not brought down. It would seem to me to be a comparatively simple matter to have laid upon the table of the House, at the beginning of each session, a list of the returns ordered during the previous session and not brought down, so that members would have the information, and also the attention of the different departments would be brought to the circumstance that certain orders of the House have been complied with. I do not know what the system is with regard to this matter, or whether it is treated in any systematic way. But if not, I would venture to suggest to the leader of the House, and to you, Mr. Speaker, that some amendment might be made, so that the information might be before us at the commencement of each session.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. There has been no system up to the present time. Every member who moves for papers is supposed to look after them, and, hitherto, that seems to have been sufficient. Sometimes a member may forget, or the occasion for which he required the information may pass, or public interest may not warrant the production of the papers. But, if the papers are really required in the public interest some member is generally ready to look after them. The Secretary of State is the minister who takes charge of these matters. The work, I think, is done very thoroughly. Up to this time there has been no system, except that which I have described, if it be a system.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Would it be possible for the Secretary of State to furnish us with that information for the last two sessions?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Yes.

Mr. T. S. SPROULE (East Grey). A return in which I was interested was moved for at a comparatively early period last session, and was afterwards referred to. It

was important, in my opinion, that the information should be brought down. The return had not been brought down by the dying days of the session, and I do not know whether it has been brought down yet or not. When an order is made for a return of that nature, the return ought to be brought down during the session, unless extremely strong reason is given to the contrary.

Mr. FOSTER. Yesterday the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) made inquiry with regard to the Auditor General's Report. It did not seem to me that the answer of the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) on that point was very satisfactory. The right hon. gentleman having the oversight of the whole business of the House and, of course, being most anxious that that business should be proceeded with the fullest information possible and as rapidly as possible, one would think that he would have noted the absence of such an important document as this and would have made inquiry with reference to it. I am not sure whether he has done so since yesterday's reminder or not. In any case, I submit that the excuse offered is not a good excuse for the failure to bring down this report—simply that it is not legally required to be produced until fifteen days after the opening of the House. The ex-Auditor General, a man of great experience, who was very many years in office, said that there was no difficulty at all in having the earlier portions of that report out before the end of the year and in the hands of the members, and the whole report could be ready by the first of the year. As the government made a change in that office, it is to be supposed that they changed it for the betterment of the service and increased rapidity of the work, and that it could not have been difficult—at least, need not have been difficult—for the new Auditor General to have had his report ready for members of the House. I was anxiously looking for it for months, I expected to get the first instalment of it about the last of December or along in January, so that I could have it studied up. But now it appears from the Prime Minister's communication with his officer that it is impossible for us to have it in due time, and that it will have to be crowded in with all the other hurried work of the session. I wish the Prime Minister would look after these things a little better.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Well, Mr. Speaker, I wish to repel the soft impeachment of my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) that I have been neglectful of the supervision which he thinks I have over the officers of the government. My hon. friend knows from long experience that the Auditor General is not an officer of the government, he is an officer of parliament, and I have no more control over the Auditor General than my hon. friend has himself.