

has not thoroughly welcomed the suggestion that Parliament should meet in January instead of in November. The suggestion has been made to me over and over again during the past two years that in this Parliament we accomplish very little indeed before the Christmas vacation; that the Christmas vacation is usually a somewhat protracted period, and that the members who come from distant parts of the country, and particularly those who come from the West and have to close their homes for the winter, are left in Ottawa for two or three or four weeks with absolutely nothing to do, awaiting the convenience of those who, like my right hon. friend, live in or near the capital, and to whom it is a matter of no inconvenience whatever that the public business should be so conducted. I venture to hope that members of this House may be inspired with a desire to expedite business, and I think that my friends from the Maritime provinces, from the West, and from the distant portions of Ontario and Quebec, will welcome the innovation upon which we have embarked this year, and will justify the Government in the course it has taken in postponing the meeting of Parliament until January.

Then my right hon. friend tried to make merry at the expense of the Government and to make some more or less caustic observations at the expense of my hon. friend the Solicitor General (Mr. Meighen). I am pleased to know that he considers the choice an excellent one, and I am also glad that he realizes that there is a very great number of men in the Liberal-Conservative party in this House who are capable of filling that office with honour and ability. That is absolutely true, and if all the observations of my right hon. friend were as apt and as much to the point as that particular observation I would have no fault whatever to find with him. He has referred to these gentlemen as pebbles on the beach. Fortunately we were not in the position of my right hon. friend who on five different occasions could not find any pebble on the beach on his own side of the House, because he went outside of the House to select a Minister of Justice, a Minister of Railways and Canals, a Minister of Labour, a Minister of Public Works, and last but not least a Secretary of State. Under these circumstances I am sure my right hon. friend will be disposed to congratulate the Conservative party that it is not afflicted by that unfortunate poverty of talent which was indicated by the course that the right hon. gentleman adopted on five occasions. We have an abundance of splendid

material on this side of the House, and I join with my right hon. friend in congratulating the Liberal-Conservative party of this country that it does possess in this House so splendid an abundance of the most excellent material.

My right hon. friend also found fault with the absence of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster). Whatever might be the possible detriment to the public interest which would be occasioned by the absence of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, I am very much inclined to think that my right hon. friend, in his own heart, would be very glad to see him remain absent, would be very glad not to have him here during the session at all. As a matter of fact, let me either encourage or discourage my right hon. friend, as the case may be, by informing him that the Minister of Trade and Commerce is on the ocean now and that by about next Monday he will be here ready to answer my right hon. friend on that point. The Minister of Trade and Commerce is a member of a very important commission which had its origin in a resolution passed by the Imperial Conference of 1911. The right hon. leader of the Opposition thinks that a minister of the Crown for Canada ought not to be a member of that commission. I do not concur in the view which the right hon. gentleman has expressed, because I consider it exceedingly important that a man occupying the very important and responsible portfolio of Minister of Trade and Commerce, the duties of which are especially concerned with questions of trade between the various dominions of this Empire and with the resources which exist within those dominions, should be on hand in Great Britain, in Australia, in Canada and in South Africa to make a comprehensive and close study of those conditions; and I know of no man in Canada who is more thoroughly competent to undertake the duties of a member of that very important commission, representing Canada in that behalf, than is the Hon. George E. Foster.

My right hon. friend spoke on many subjects. Among other things, he dealt with the failure in the Speech from the Throne to make any reference to the Highways Bill. I desire to say in the presence of this House and of this country that the Highways Bill, as we introduced it in two successive sessions, and as it passed the House of Commons on both those occasions, was a perfectly fair Bill which conserved the interest of every province in Canada. Further than that, I am in a position to state that the majority of the pro