

most human beings have such moments, but deliver me from that chronic weakness which manifests itself in my hon. friend from year to year, and almost from decade to decade. Then some provision must be made for the public works of the country, and then there is the tariff measure. I have put that measure last because it is the most important. It is the only one that the country takes any decided or active interest in. What I want to know is why the Government have allowed the tariff measure to lie over for nine months or more, and are anxious to have it lie over still longer, on the plea that they must first introduce and carry through the Franchise measure. My argument is that in a session begun late and which ought to conclude early, it is the duty of the Government to put before us, as soon as possible, the measure which the country is most loudly and imperatively calling for. That measure, beyond doubt, is the Tariff Bill. If there is no doubt at all as to which is the most important Bill, there is equally not the least doubt as to which is the least important for this House to consider this session. The least important is the Franchise Bill to which the Government propose now to give precedence. Why, it is practically of not the least use, by the admission of my hon. friend himself, who told us in this House, not long ago, that he did not suppose there would be any use at all for that Bill except at a general election which would not take place for three or four years yet. He declares he is pretty strongly entrenched, he thinks he has a good and strong working majority, but that is the very strongest argument against his taking up the time of this House, to the exclusion of weighty matters, with a measure, which, even if passed into law, he does not propose to make use of for four or five years. There is no doubt in the country or in the House as to which of the measures promised in the Speech from the Throne is the least important this session. Why, then, should the most important measure be delayed and the least important be proceeded with? My hon. friend from North Wellington (Mr. McMullen) undertook, the other day, to break the force of the argument by showing how long we took to bring down our budgets in previous sessions when we were in office. I just want to say two things in reply to that argument, if you can call it one. In the first place, you must recollect that this Government is to be judged by a nine months' delay, and not by a delay simply from the 25th of March of this year, in bringing down its tariff. When a Liberal-Conservative Government had the direction of affairs, it did not wait until the second session of Parliament to bring down its tariff but brought it down during the first session and gave it precedence of other measures. And not only is it nine months, instead of a few days, which is the delay on the part of this

Government to bring down its tariff measure, but there is another fact to be borne in mind. Every tariff revision, undertaken by a Liberal-Conservative Government, was one which involved the least uncertainty and disturbance of the business of the country. Why? Because every tariff revision that took place under a Liberal-Conservative Government was effected on the basis of a principle which was announced beforehand and which the whole country knew. So that although there must necessarily, under any circumstances, be some doubt and uncertainty, still the greater part of that is removed when the country knows what the principle is which the Government are going to conserve in bringing down its tariff. In 1878, the tariff was preceded by explicit declarations of principle on the part of the then Opposition in this House. It was preceded by their canvas before the country, by their declarations before the people, and whether the Government took 20, or 30, or 50 days, after the opening of the session, to bring down their tariff, the people knew that it would, when it came down, be a tariff which would conserve and protect the industries of the country, and consequently they could mould their business according to the principle then declared. In 1893, I made on behalf of the Government of that day, from that side of the House, an explicit statement as to what would be the character of the revision we proposed to make in 1894. None of my hon. friends opposite can deny that. In their own party platform, adopted in 1893, they quoted the words I used, and found fault with the principle I enunciated in 1893, as that upon which the tariff was to be revised. When do you have the maximum of disturbance and uncertainty with regard to an approaching revision of the tariff? You have it, as you had it in the United States, after that contest in which the Democratic party, with their half free trade declarations, came back from the polls with a majority in both Houses, and when, as it took them a year and a half or more to bring down their tariff, all that time in the United States there was the direst uncertainty. Why? Because the people took these men to mean what their pledges before the elections meant, namely, that they were to revolutionize the principle upon which the tariff was framed and make it free trade, as far as the revenue would permit. We see to-day in the Dominion of Canada a case stronger than that. The Democratic party, however far they went, never went so far as to authoritatively give the people of the United States to believe that they were going to introduce anything like free trade. It was to be a revenue tariff with incidental protection. But even that threw the business of the United States into the direst confusion. To-day what have you in Canada? What have you had for nine months?