

fence (Sir Frederick Borden) to say some days ago that by mutual arrangement there was a postponement of the discussion, and therefore I do not think we should be complained of because that matter comes in now. My hon. friend also speaks of the main estimates. I would say to my hon. friend that these estimates were prepared in November or December last. The House met in January, and as a consequence the estimates for the coming year were prepared either in November or December. Is it a marvellous thing that since the time these estimates were prepared we should have better information? Is it a marvellous thing that since last December or November, when we asked to do a certain thing, we should have received new light and later information showing the necessity for a larger appropriation? Is it a marvellous thing that a work that was viewed with less favour then should present itself more forcibly to the mind of the government now? Since we have been detained by unusual circumstances to a much later period than usual, and since the House has been busily occupied with other important work, I do not think there is much ground for complaint because of the fact of bringing these estimates down now. I, therefore, say that the hon. gentleman has very little ground to complain, first, because we have been busily employed; secondly, because the main estimates were prepared many months ago; and, thirdly, because it is always difficult, if not impossible, to foreshadow appropriations, and I appeal to the experience of all governments when I say that you must bring down very considerable sums in the form of supplementary estimates at a late period in the session. I do not know that it would be profitable to go into that question or to make a comparison with the sums that hon. gentlemen opposite have brought down. My hon. friend says that even if they did we should not remind them of it. Well, that is the privilege of the opposition. It is equally the privilege of the opposition to say some foolish things, and it is a privilege that hon. gentlemen opposite have enjoyed to the fullest extent; but I think that any one who has any idea of the practical working of a government in a country like ours will realize that it is not possible at the beginning of the session to foreshadow all the appropriations that are necessary, and it would not be unreasonable if, towards the close of the session, supplementary estimates had to be brought down.

I admit that the House should have the greatest possible opportunity to discuss public questions of this kind, and if any hon. gentleman desires information I am sure every minister will feel it his duty to give it. I have no doubt that after the lapse of a few days every item in these estimates can be quite as fairly considered as if they were before the House for a length of time. I do not wish to be understood

as opposing the general contention of my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) that it should be the business of governments to try to bring down their appropriations at an early stage of the session, but the reasons that have accounted for the present delay are fair reasons which I think the House ought to accept.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN (Carleton, Ont). The reasons for the delay in bringing down the estimates may be fair, but the Minister of Finance has not mentioned them. In reply to my question his answer was that I never had the privilege of bringing down estimates and did not know how difficult it was to deal with the matter. That is true, but every argument the Minister of Finance has used would be an equally good argument for bringing down the whole \$75,000,000 of main estimates just one week before the session closed. The hon. gentleman said we can get all information required, but he knows that after a session of six months the House is weary, and my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) says that the country is weary too. I do not know as to that, but I do know that members on both sides are weary of this protracted session which has extended into a season of the year when the heat has been absolutely oppressive in this chamber. It is impossible to get men to stay here, not to speak of asking them to take an intelligent interest in the discussion of these estimates. The Minister of Finance has given not a word of reason for bringing down these estimates at this time. His friends throughout the country have been saying that the opposition have unduly protracted the session; but suppose the session ended a month or a week ago these estimates must have gone by the board, if the statement of the Minister of Finance is to be relied upon. There are 605 items here altogether, and I venture to say that nine-tenths of them are not urgent and might just as well have been postponed until the commencement of another session. Any items which are urgent must have been known to the officers of the government and could have been submitted months ago. The Minister of Finance says by way of illustration that the Transcontinental Railway is not a new matter. It is not; it has engaged the attention of this parliament and the government for two years, and the appropriation with regard to it could have been brought down three months ago just as well as now. The government is not dealing fairly by the parliament or the country in this matter. When we look over the long list of appropriations for rivers and harbours and other similar works it must be conceded that very little discrimination was exercised by the Finance Minister, or else the Department of Public Works must have submitted a most extraordinary sup-