

was informed, others in the States, and even to those in the Maritime Provinces, a return to Ottawa, though not physically impossible, as it was to their colleagues, would prove a great inconvenience at such a season. On the other hand, I learnt that the Opposition were mustering their full force, an operation for which they possessed certain geographical facilities. Were, therefore, the House of Commons to meet for the transaction of public business, it was evident that important votes might be passed, and decisions taken, contrary to the real sense of the country, and that my Ministers might justly complain that they were being unfairly treated, and their fate determined by a packed Parliament.

But, apart from these practical considerations, a grave question of principle seemed to me involved. The Imperial Officer representing the Crown in the Dominion, is the natural protector of the federal rights of its various Provinces, as secured under an Imperial Act. The sanctity of the rights of any one of these Provinces is not affected by the number of its representatives or the amount of its population. In this view it is especially necessary that, in a country of such enormous distances, ample notice should be given of the times and seasons when Parliament is to sit. But if it be once admitted that the official "fixtures" which regulate the opening or closing of a Session and the conduct of public business, are to be capriciously tampered with, and changed at so short a notice as to preclude the distant representatives from being present, it is evident much wrong and inconvenience would result, and the door be opened to a great deal of trickery at the hands of an unscrupulous Minister.

The foregoing considerations pointed pretty distinctly to prorogation as an inevitable necessity of the situation. Only one other alternative indeed either suggested itself then or has occurred to me since, and that was another adjournment of the House to such a date as would suit the convenience of the absentees. At first, I confess this course appeared to me fairly practicable, but further reflection disclosed difficulties I had not at once seen. In the first place, this was an arrangement which I had not the power of enforcing, and I was confronted by the obvious reflection, that if the Government made a motion to that effect, it might be defeated or met with an amendment tantamount to a vote of want of confidence at the hands of the majority in presence, and I should then find myself landed in the very position which I was quite satisfied ought to be avoided. Even if the opponents of the Government were to refrain from taking so unfair an advantage of their numerical superiority, it was evident that in view of the adjournment, preliminary issues would crop up of vital importance relative to the fresh instructions to be given to the Committee; for instance, whether the evidence was to be sworn or unsworn, and, if the former, how the oath was to be administered,—all of which would necessarily be decided in a manner unduly adverse to the Government, and in the absence of those who had an undoubted right to make their voices heard on the occasion. I was so anxious, nevertheless, to find some way of avoiding a course which I foresaw would be denounced, however unjustly, as an undue exercise of the Queen's Prerogative, that I thought it desirable to make a suggestion in this sense to Sir John Macdonald, offering at the same time to become the channel of communication by which an understanding, between him and his opponents might be arrived at. Sir John's reply was very much in the sense I had anticipated. He insisted upon the injustice of his Government being given over bound hand and foot to the tender mercies of their opponents in the absence of his supporters, whom he had dismissed to their homes with my sanction, and with the acquiescence of Parliament. He called my attention to the fact, that the Opposition organs, far from hinting at any compromise, were insisting on the fact that a quorum of Parliament could do anything that Parliament itself could do, and were evincing by unmistakable signs that they would show no quarter:—that both Messrs. Blake and Dorion had endeavoured to persuade the Committee to content themselves with unsworn evidence, and that if Parliament met for business they would be in a position to pass an instruction to the Committee to that effect,—that no man would be willing to risk his life, still less his honour in the hands