

not very often we have the pleasure of agreeing. I think, however, the hon. gentleman agrees with me, because the proposal now before the House has already been submitted from this side of the House, and was suggested many years ago. It is the first step in the right direction. No doubt many reforms may yet be adopted in the proceedings of the House, and this, I think, will be entering the thin end of the wedge. Now that we have begun the work of reform, we may go on quietly and smoothly, and perhaps arrive at a better mode of procedure. There is at present great loss of time, and I draw the attention of the Government especially to the loss of time occasioned in regard to Private Bills. These should be in the hands of the hon. Minister of Justice, or the law officers of the Crown, at the opening of the Session, so that the drudgery work of the Committee should be, to a certain extent, lightened. I suggested this course many years ago, and I suggest its adoption now.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. I do not like to take feathers belonging to other birds, and, therefore, I must say that I am only the mouthpiece of the Committee in this instance, being Chairman of the Railway Committee. A prominent member of that Committee, the hon. gentleman who sits opposite to me, proposed a motion, and it was adopted by the Committee; and in the Banking Committee another hon. member proposed another motion, a little different from this one, and I have combined the two in the motion now before the House, which will cover the whole ground, and I have no doubt it will be adopted. I, therefore, do not like the hon. member for L'Islet (Mr. Casgrain) to give me credit for what belongs, first to the members who moved the motions, in each Committee, and then to the Committee themselves. Of course, I am always ready to receive compliments from the hon. gentleman, but in this case I, as Chairman of the Railway Committee, can receive only the one-hundred and fortieth part of the compliment. The hon. gentleman has made another suggestion. It must, however, be remembered that reforms only come by degrees; no doubt the reform now before the House will prove a good one. In regard to the suggestions of the hon. member for Montmagny (Mr. Landry), I think the Rules of the House might be reprinted, and that a favorable opportunity now offers to do so. I also agree with him, that the Confederation Act of 1837, might with great propriety be added to the little book supplied to each member, as well as the Rules of the House. Either the proper Committee, or perhaps the Speaker, will see that this matter is attended to next Session.

Mr. BLAKE. I think this is a step in the right direction; but the suggestion of the hon. member for L'Islet ought to receive consideration, even this Session. While we are amending the Standing Rules, I think we should take some steps to remove one of the greatest sources of evil, that is the late period to which the larger proportion of the Bills is delayed, when the work is done hurriedly. If the House were to record its insistence of the Rules for the future, we would get rid of a portion of the difficulty, and the work of the Committee would be properly done. After we have applied the Rule, one of the law officers of the House should examine each Private Bill for the use of the Committee, not for the promoter, and should make his report of it just as the Clerk of the Committee on Standing Orders compares the notices and reports. You make a Rule as to the mode in which the Bill is to be framed, that any general clauses which are sought to be applied are not to be repeated, but simply to be incorporated by reference; that any departure from this regulation is to be made only on special grounds, and noted upon the Bill indicating where the departure is. If the Committee is to consider when the Bill comes before it, whether this Rule has been complied with, half of the time now wasted in doing draughtsman's work in getting up the clauses will be spent. I think,

Mr. CASGRAIN.

therefore, we should make some other provision, either by Rule or arrangement, in order to have a report on the Bill submitted to the Committee, and have the respects which it is defective pointed out. In that way the Committee would be able to act rapidly, and, if necessary, reject Bills without their time being wasted. It has happened this Session time and again, that the Railway Committee occupy two hours in discussing a Railway Bill, the important part of which would only occupy ten minutes, the rest of the time being occupied in trying to lick the Bill into shape; and the rest of the time we are engaged in trying to lick into something like shape—and occasionally, I am afraid, into pretty bad shape—the abominable Bills presented to us for consideration. The other practical point to which I wish to direct attention is the old one, of which complaint was made, I think, by the hon. member for Hochelaga—that it was rather unjust to say that our Rules ought to be complied with, as to the time of depositing Private Bills, within eight days of the Session, because he says two months' notice is required by the Standing Rules to be given, and the Session of Parliament is not announced as early often as two months, and therefore Private Bills' promoters cannot possibly proceed. I think, if my hon. friend will permit me to say so, that this objection is founded on a misapprehension of the Rule, because the Rule says such notice—which the promoters are to give—shall be continued, in each case, for a period of at least two months during the interval of time between the close of the next preceding Session and the consideration of the petition; and, therefore, any promoter just as soon as he has determined at the next Session of Parliament to introduce a Bill, can begin publishing at once, and is not called upon to wait for the *Gazette* that summons Parliament for despatch of business. But, at the same time, I repeat the suggestion which I made before on this subject, which is, that it would be probably better to shorten the period of two months considerably, and make it terminate with the opening of the Session, than to keep it as long as two months, and make it terminate only with the consideration of the petition; for so long as we give that flexible time for termination, with our evil habits of yielding to neglectful and apathetic promoters, they will expect and rely upon that, but if it be announced that there will be the comparatively brief limit of one month instead of two, to terminate with the opening of the Session, then I think you will find a better practice. The extent to which our Rule which requires eight days before meeting, and that a copy of the Bill shall be deposited, in order to printing and translation, has been complied with, will be shown by the statistics of this Session, which I have procured. The total number of Private Bills introduced to date—a couple of days ago—was fifty-six; of these there were but seventeen deposited in accordance with the Rule; there were ten more deposited within the eight days which preceded the Session running over up to the day preceding the Session; eleven were deposited between the 9th and 27th of February, and the remaining eighteen at various intervals between the 28th of February and the 16th of April, so that the great bulk of the whole Bills deposited this Session, have not been regularly deposited at the time required by the Standing Rule. It seems to me that in place of that state of things, unless we take the opportunity of recasting the Rule, and place it on a more workmanlike basis, we should pass a solemn resolution to act under our Rules in future. How we can reasonably expect an amendment next Session, I submit for the consideration of the hon. gentleman.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. The hon. gentleman suggested just now, in accordance with what the hon. member for L'Islet stated, that it would be proper that Bills before being submitted to the Committee might be examined either by the law officers of the House, or by the Secretary