

the reflection of my hon. friend as to the late period at which the session has been called. The reason, is known to the government, but it is better perhaps that I should give it exactly as it is. Parliament is aware that during last session it was announced that a thorough investigation would be made by a competent commission appointed to inquire into the working of the tariff with the view of ascertaining whether or not certain changes were necessary and to what extent the tariff was satisfactory to the people. The members of the House are also aware that the commission started early in its work, or a few weeks after prorogation. After having held one or two sittings in Toronto—I think it was—they went to the new provinces beyond Lake Superior, but the people at that time were so busy with the harvest that, upon the representations made, it was thought preferable to postpone the sittings of the commission in the West for a few weeks. The commission resumed their sittings as early as possible under such circumstances and prosecuted their work without any intermission at all except that which was unavoidable until the latter days of the month of January. Parliament was convened immediately after the commission had closed its sittings. In fact parliament was summoned on the very day after the last sitting of the commission in the city of Ottawa. It would have been utterly impossible to have convened this session earlier than it has been called together. That is the explanation of the time at which parliament has been called and I think it will be found to be a reasonable one.

I may say to the House, and I have to convey to it a very sad piece of information, that it had been our intention to have a revision of tariff during this session, but the House is aware of the fact that my hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) some few weeks ago,—in fact, almost immediately after the tariff commission had concluded its sittings—met with a very painful accident, an accident of a more serious nature than was thought at first. He has been confined to his bed for three weeks now and it is not expected that he can get out of the house for three or four weeks more if indeed at that time. Under these circumstances, the Minister of Finance being unable to give to the work of the tariff commission the attention which he had intended and which we had expected him to give to it, we have come to the reluctant conclusion that it will be impossible to have a revision of the tariff this session. What we propose, therefore, is to have, if possible, a very short session. We do not propose to introduce any legislation except such as is absolutely unavoidable, to have the Supply Bill passed and to summon parliament again early in the month of November to deal not with the general busi-

ness of parliament but with the special question of the revision of the tariff. The fiscal year it is proposed to bring to the month of April instead of to the month of July. The present fiscal year will not conclude until the month of July and therefore it is not expected that the general business of parliament—the reports and so on—can be ready in the month of November, but we anticipate fully that it may be ready early in January and we shall ask the House, when we call it again in November, to deal with the question of the tariff.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. What I understand is that the fiscal year will begin on the 1st of April or rather conclude on the 31st of March and that estimates only for nine months will be voted this year?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Yes; in fact, that is hinted in the speech from the throne and we shall introduce a measure to change the end of the fiscal year from June 30 to March 31. I think my hon. friend asked me also about the instructions to the commissioners.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The insurance commission.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Yes. They will be laid before parliament on Monday next. In regard to another question which has been asked by my hon. friend as to whether or not the commission will be authorized to employ counsel, it is provided already that there shall be counsel to carry out the investigation and to assist the commissioners in the carrying out of the investigation. The counsel who has been selected by the government, I think, will be found acceptable to both sides of the House and to the country generally—Mr. Geo. F. Shepley, K.C., of Toronto. I do not think it would have been possible to have selected a more competent man and the instructions which have been given to Mr. Shepley are that he is authorized to employ any additional counsel he may think fit to assist him in the work.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. Would that include actuaries?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I am not aware that it includes actuaries. But the instructions to Mr. Shepley are to get all the assistance he desires and which is necessary to have as thorough an investigation as is possible, in fact, such an investigation as will satisfy my hon. friend (Mr. W. F. Maclean) himself.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN (South York). Mr. Speaker, I desire to say now that I protest against the government taking away the undoubted right of parliament to name the commission that ought to investigate the insurance question. Recently, in the state of New York, when the legislature was not in session, the governor of that state took