

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

TUESDAY, 4th May, 1886.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

PRAYERS.

FIRST READING.

Bill (No. 128) to incorporate the Northumberland Straits Tunnel Co.—(Mr. Hackett.)

RELIEF OF FLORA BIRRELL.

Mr. ROBERTSON (Hamilton) moved the first reading of Bill (No. 129) for the relief of Flora Birrell.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. I do not ask for a division on this motion, but will ask it on the second reading, so that you will be kind enough to declare it now carried on a division.

Motion agreed to on a division, and Bill read the first time.

BUSINESS OF THE SESSION.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN moved that, for the remainder of the Session, Government business shall have precedence on Wednesday after routine proceedings.

Mr. BLAKE. This motion is based upon that which I have ventured to object to at an earlier period of the Session—that the late period at which the Government has called us together renders it almost unavoidable that more time than ought to be taken at this period should be taken from private members' business and devoted to the business of the Government. On the whole, having regard to the general business of the Session, I believe that less public evil will be caused by our devoting that time to the Government business, and to that extent depriving private members of their advantages, than by adopting any other course. In that point of view it is not my intention to resist the motion, although, as I say, private members have not had this Session the advantages they ought to have had, owing to the character of the circumstances at the beginning of the Session, and the lateness at which the House was called together. I would submit, however, that questions ought to be allowed to precede, as on former occasions, on Wednesdays. I would also make this suggestion, which indeed, I may say, is a result of a conference I had with the hon. gentleman, whether it would not be for the convenience of the House and the discharge of private business that we should adopt as part of this motion that the order of business on Mondays should be for the future Wednesday's order, which will give private members an opportunity of dealing with motions up to six o'clock, and public Bills and orders after six o'clock, instead of absorbing the whole time with motions. There are some important Bills on the paper—several with reference to the question on Temperance, and so forth—and probably it would be more important to give an opportunity for them to be dealt with than to deal with the other motions. I think, however, that we should have another opportunity of clearing the paper of the undisputed notices, and we might take a part of the first Wednesday for this work. I propose, permanently, that we should have questions on Wednesdays, and that on Mondays, after private Bills, the Order of the Day should be the order of Wednesdays.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. The hon. gentleman speaks of the lateness of the Session. This Session was certainly
Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN.

called later than usual; but the hon. gentleman should not forget that instead of ending the Session in May last year, we ended it about the 20th of July. Therefore it was foreseen that the House could not be called so early this year as it was in previous years. However, I do not think the business in the hands of private members has suffered much. On the contrary, during the two months that have elapsed I think private members have had every opportunity to bring their measures before the House; and we have done, during these two months, a great deal more work than is generally done during the first two months of the Session. However, I have no objection, if the House agrees to my motion, that on Wednesday questions by members should come first, and that on the first Wednesday we should go over the list of notices of motions and adopt those that are unopposed. Then, as to Monday, I think the suggestion about which the hon. gentleman had spoken to me, as he says, would meet the views of the members generally. That would give hon. gentlemen on Monday from three to six, first for questions and then for notices of motions, and after 8 o'clock private Bills for an hour, and then public Bills, thus covering the different classes of work in the hands of the ordinary members of the House. If the House will allow me, I will modify my motion accordingly.

Mr. MITCHELL. I must say I do not at all agree with the hon. the acting leader of the Government in this matter. I do not think the opportunity for carrying on private business has been given to members, as he states. It will be in the recollection of the House that while the debate on the North-West matter was going on, about four weeks ago, I suggested that the unopposed motions should be taken up and gone through with, in order that gentlemen who desired papers to be prepared should have an opportunity of getting them brought down in time to be available when they wished to make use of them. Now, we have only one day in the week left for private business, although there are notices standing on the paper, some of which have been there for a month, and hon. gentlemen are unable to obtain the papers for which they desired to move. When I made the suggestion to which I refer, the acting leader of the Government intimated that he would be prepared to consider the suggestion, I thought to consider it favorably; but it has passed over, and the private members have not had the chance of getting the papers and correspondence which they desire. However, we must endeavor to remedy the difficulty as best we can, and if the unopposed motions are taken up, that in part meets the difficulty, though late in the day. I also opposed the Government taking all the private days for the Riel debate, instead of allowing papers to be moved for and brought down. However, we have to deal with matters as we find them; and next Session, if we are here, we should pursue a different course, and get the motions for papers put through at an early stage of the Session, so that the papers may be brought down in time for members to deal with them.

Sir HECTOR LANGEVIN. The hon. gentleman is mistaken about the promise I made that on a certain day, with the consent of the House, we should go over the notices of motions, and adopt those that were unopposed. It is not so late in the day as the hon. gentleman says. I am afraid that on that day he was not here when the proceedings commenced, but that was not our fault. He may be assured that the promise made by me was fulfilled to the letter.

Mr. MITCHELL. Though I was not here, as important business kept me away that day, I had placed my business in the hands of an hon. gentleman who was here, and he informed me that that course was not pursued; and when I came back, I found the Order paper full.