

Mr. DEVLIN. That is correct.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. My friend from Wright (Mr. Devlin) is usually wrong, so I think we may take it for granted that he does not depart from his accustomed usage on this occasion.

Mr. CONMEE. The hon. member stated that this was published in a newspaper in Ontario. Would he be good enough to give the name of the paper?

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Mr. Speaker, may I be permitted for once to take upon myself your functions and to appoint the hon. member a committee of one to give that information to the House.

I desire at this early stage in the session to deal briefly with certain matters of comment in the press of the country during recent weeks respecting the length of sessions of parliament. I have heard and read a great deal of criticism upon the length of sessions, and I am not disposed to disagree that the sessions have some times been perhaps unduly long. It may be that there is a certain misapprehension in the minds of the public that a session is expensive in proportion to its length. As a matter of fact the indemnity of members of the Senate and House of Commons and the salaries of permanent officials of the House do not increase with the length of the session and therefore, so far as they are concerned, the expense to the public is precisely the same whether the session be long or short. Of course in other respects the expense is increased by a lengthy session.

I desire to again point out to my right hon. friend (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) in no censorious or partisan spirit, who I think will agree in my statement, that the date at which a government brings down its important measures in any session has a great deal to do with the length of that session, and I pause to express the very sincere hope that this session, called as it is on a very late day, will find the government prepared and that we will have all important government measures down at a very early date.

Let us look at the sessions of the last five years. The session of 1903 opened on the 12th of March and closed on October 23. The Bill respecting the National Transcontinental Railway was introduced on July 30, after the House had been in session 141 days; the necessary resolution was not moved until the 11th of August after the session had lasted 153 days. The Railway Subsidies were not brought down until October 10, when the House had been in session 212 days and they were not moved until October 22, when the House had been in session 224 days. A very important measure respecting the Quebec bridge was brought to the attention of the House for the first time

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on October 21, when the House had been in session 223 days, and moved on October 22, when the House had been in session 224 days.

With regard to these measures and to all the others which I shall venture to bring to the attention of the House, the government is face to face with one of two alternatives, either that they were not ready with these measures and purposely held them back in order that discussion might be restricted in respect to some of them at least, or that the session was not too long for the necessary measures which the government thought it was its duty to bring before the attention of parliament in the interests of the country.

In 1904 the session opened on the 10th of March and closed on August 10. Notice was given of the Customs Act on June 28, after the House had been in session 110 days and the Bill was moved on August 8, after the House had been in session 151 days. The Railway Subsidies were moved on August 8, when the House had been in session 151 days.

In 1905 the session opened on January 11 and closed July 20. The Autonomy Bills were given their first reading on February 21. The House had then been in session 41 days. The second reading of one of these Bills was moved on March 22, when the House had been in session 70 days. The second reading of the other was moved on July 4, when the House had been in session 174 days. It would perhaps be unfair to criticise the late reading of the second of these measures as the whole subject was thoroughly threshed out in the debate on the first Bill.

The session of 1906 opened March 8 and closed July 13. The amendment to the Act respecting the National Transcontinental Railway received its first reading June 27. The House had then been in session 110 days. It was given its second reading on July 3 when the House had been in session 116 days. The railway subsidies were brought down on June 25, when the House had been in session 108 days and they were moved on the following day.

In 1907 the session opened on the 2nd of November and closed on the 26th of April. The railway subsidies were brought down on the 19th of April; the House had then been in session 148 days. They were moved on the 25th of April, when the House had been in session 154 days. The bounties on iron and steel were brought down on the 5th of April, when the House had been in session 134 days. They were moved on the 23rd of April, when the House had been in session 152 days. The bounties on binder twine were brought down on the same dates. The Quebec Bridge and Railway Company loan was brought down on the 17th of April, 146 days after the House had opened, and it was moved on the 19th