

such that we cannot have at this time anything like the usual session of Parliament. We are not in a condition to do so. Even the examination of the Public Accounts, the hon. gentleman knows, cannot go on at the present time. He knows very well that it would not be for us anything that would break our hearts, if we were in a position to bring to the scrutiny of this House the Public Accounts of last year when the public expenditures were controlled by hon. gentlemen opposite. But, Sir, we cannot do it; we have to defer that pleasure to another session. We have called the session for one reason and for one reason alone, that is, to obtain from this Parliament the supplies for carrying on the business of the country—the supplies which the late Parliament, under the leadership of hon. gentlemen opposite, who had then the responsibility of public affairs, did not vote. This is the only reason why we have called this session of Parliament.

In this connection the hon. gentleman made some pleasant allusion, or bitter allusion if he prefers, to the issue of the special warrant. Well, all I have to say at this moment is that I will follow the example he gave at a later period in his speech, and will not discuss this question now, because we shall have an opportunity of discussing it by itself on a future occasion.

Another criticism which the hon. gentleman indulged in was, that though we were elected on the policy of tariff reform, we were not prepared to-day to lay on the Table of the House any measure of tariff reform; and he says that the uncertainty of delay is worse than what he calls free trade. Sir, the issue between the two parties in the last election was whether the National Policy should be preserved intact, as it was, or whether there should be tariff reform, and the policy of tariff reform succeeded. Now, the hon. gentleman says, go on and carry out your promise, and bring down at once your measure of tariff reform. All I have to say is that it is my extreme sorrow, and the extreme sorrow of my colleagues as well, that it is not possible for us at this moment to bring forward such a measure of tariff reform as we would like to have. But there is the obvious and manifest reason for it. Of all the evils that a protective tariff brings on the people, perhaps the greatest is that though the people have universally and unanimously determined to have a reform of that tariff, yet such conditions have been brought about under it that no such reform can be effected without exposing the country to some commercial disturbance. We must try to avoid this. One of the effects of a protective tariff, as the hon. gentleman well knows, is to create a high pressure atmosphere, in which all kinds of industry, trade and commerce have to live and operate; and a sudden disturbance of that condition

Mr. LAURIER.

of things, while dangerous to natural life, might also be dangerous to commercial life, and, therefore, though we are determined to reform the tariff, we have to do it cautiously and after deep and anxious consideration. We have to proceed slowly. There are, I admit, certain items which we might reform immediately. The hon. gentleman has instanced coal. But any reform in the tariff, to be effective, must be general. To reform the tariff upon any one article or two articles alone, might afford some relief to some classes; but it might perhaps jeopardize the interests of other classes; because in any civilized country, under a tariff such as we have, all interests are dependent upon each other, and to disturb the condition of one you disturb the condition of all. Therefore, we have been forced to the conclusion that if we are to reform the tariff, as we must, we must do it in a single measure, to be submitted to Parliament at one and the same time. But, Sir, let me go back a few years. I am not bound to take shelter under the examples of hon. gentlemen opposite; but let me call the attention of the hon. leader of the Opposition to this fact. He has stated that in the election of 1878 the issues between the two parties were clear cut. So they were. There was a revenue tariff policy on one side, and protection on the other side. On that occasion the policy of protection prevailed. What took place? Did the hon. gentleman who succeeded at that time and his colleagues proceed at once to plunge the country into the throes of a reform of the tariff? The hon. gentleman knows that it took considerable time to consider the reform which they were to bring forward, even though the issues were clearly cut. The election took place on the 17th of September, the Government of Mr. Mackenzie resigned on the 9th of October. Parliament was not called until the 13th of February, and it was not until the 14th of March that the tariff measure was brought before the House. Here is an example from a source which I am not fond of following, but which still gives in this matter an example of caution which we are bound to follow and will follow.

But the hon. gentleman devoted by far the greater and most important part of his speech to the Manitoba school question, and the whole tendency of his argument to-day was to try and put us in contradiction with ourselves. He said that we had one policy here and another there. I take issue with him upon that. The hon. gentleman wants to know what is the policy of the Government upon this question. If I were to extend to him the same treatment which was meted out to us when on the other side, I would ask what is the policy of the Opposition. Now, we heard during the last session from the lips of the hon. gentleman, not once or twice but a dozen times, a declaration which is very different from what