

ber. I understand that the object my hon. friend has in view is more particularly to have the business of parliament begun at an earlier date in the year or at a late date in the previous year, so that we might not be kept here during the summer months on business which ought to be completed by the middle of March.

Hon. WM. ROSS (Victoria, N.S.) Parliament has been called at a later period owing to circumstances which could not be avoided, but I would suggest to the hon. the ministers not to give dinners during the session, not to have any at homes or nonsense of that kind, and let us continue to attend to business until 12 o'clock every night. If we will do that, we will get away at the usual time. Then it will be necessary that the members from Ontario and Quebec, who are in the habit of going home at certain times, should remain in their places, if they want to have the work done properly. The work may be delayed very often because of their absence. Let us get right down to business and have no more nonsense and we will get through sooner than expected.

Mr. D. A. STEWART (Lisgar). I must say that the calling together of parliament at so late a day puts us to great inconvenience, especially those of us who come from the west. As the business of this country goes on increasing our sessions will no doubt be longer, and this year we may possibly be here until the snow flies. It is a very serious matter for those of us who are engaged in the business of farming to have to leave our farms during seeding and harvest time. Further, as the west is growing, it is likely that the representatives from the west to this House will be increased and will no doubt be mainly drawn from the agricultural class. That is another reason why I am in favour of the motion of the hon. member from Macdonald (Mr. Boyd). I must say that I was pleased to hear the remarks of the right hon. the leader of the government concerning the unwritten law that parliament should meet early in January. And the reason why I support the resolution is that it gives hon. members an opportunity of expressing their opinions, independent of party considerations, as regards the period when parliament should be called together.

Mr. A. A. C. LaRIVIERE (Provencher). I gather from the tone of the debate so far that it is the general desire of the House that we should meet earlier in the year or even late in the fall. We from the west are very much inconvenienced in having to spend the best part of the year in Ottawa attending to public business to the neglect of our own, but there is another feature of the case to which I would like to refer. I hope that the government will consider the advisability of changing our present system of meeting at night. I hope that they will look into the European and the American system, and that such a change will be

made that our daily meetings may take place at an earlier hour in the day and be closed before the dinner hour, so that we may not injure our health by these long and tedious night sittings. Our committee meetings could well be held in the evenings or earlier in the morning. If that change were adopted, if our daily meetings were begun at an earlier hour and closed before dinner, the same amount of work would be performed and perhaps more in the day than is now done, and not so much time would be lost. No doubt owing to the fact that there is no limit to our night sittings, hon. members are tempted to take up more of the time of the House than they would do if they knew that the sitting would have to be closed at a fixed hour. I hope that this question will be looked into and that a change may be adopted before long, and I have no doubt that such a change would not only promote the physical well-being of hon. members but also expedite business.

Mr. JOHN CHARLTON (North Norfolk). This question of the date of convening parliament is certainly one of very great importance to every member of this House. The circumstances that led to the late meeting of the House this year may fairly be considered unavoidable, but we have been in the habit of meeting at a date so late as to inconvenience the great majority of members. It is my opinion that we should not meet later than the second Thursday in January. The congress of the United States and the legislatures of the forty-two states of the American union all meet at fixed dates. In none of these commonwealths is there any uncertainty as to when congress or the legislature will meet, so that the members can make their business arrangements during the whole year with a definite knowledge as to when they will be required to attend to their legislative duties. The importance of this business men can thoroughly appreciate. The element of uncertainty and doubt as to the meeting of the legislature, whether it may be early in January, late in January, early in February or late in February, is a difficulty and a source of annoyance and loss. Even if the date were a late one, if it were known months ahead, the member could make his calculations and arrange his business accordingly; but that is not the case; there is always a degree of uncertainty. We are not taken into the confidence of the government. Very often the government is influenced by circumstances that might arise from time to time. If we had a fixed date of meeting, the members of the government would accommodate themselves to such an arrangement, and I verily believe that in doing so their own convenience would be consulted, and the business they had to submit to parliament would be attended to more promptly, satisfactorily, and easily to themselves than it is now. Of course, as the premier has said, exceptional circumstances may