

rangement was an awkward one to those who performed the special function of criticising the conduct of the Government, because the information which they required to perform that duty intelligently was not in their hands. That difficulty was much increased by the uncertainty as to the time at which Parliament would be called together. The date at which the House should assemble was not fixed by law or otherwise, and in the case of the present Government, the practice was anything but uniform. He thought that the Departmental Reports and the Public Accounts might be produced during, and at least before the middle of the present session, considering the date at which they had been called together, and that there was no real obstacle in the way. Under the present system the Public Accounts for 1876 would be placed in their hands in the midst of other and multifarious duties, and they could not, therefore, give them that attention which they deserved, and which could be given them if there was a shorter interval between their presentation and the transactions to which they had reference. The proposed system would have the effect of shortening the session very considerably, and they might possibly be able to get through before the thirty days were up. (Laughter.) He had always noticed that when Reformers wished to oppose any proposed reform they took refuge behind the Constitution. With regard to this particular matter, he did not think the change would (to use the words of one of the writers on the press) "blow a hole in the Constitution." And, supposing that the Constitutional practice had been in another direction, if it were thought expedient to change that practice the Legislature could change that practice. He considered that the abstract of the Public Accounts was not sufficient for the purposes of criticism, as it was generally the details of these accounts that required to be closely looked after. When the Reformers were in Opposition they agitated in the direction of this very change, and a great improvement in the time of presenting departmental reports was made in consequence thereof. He wished to refer to the almost constant violation of what he (Mr. Macdougall) deemed to be the rules of Parliament by the Minister of Public Works in imputing motives to members on the Opposition side of the House, and using unparliamentary language towards them. They had heard that hon. gentleman characterise certain members as unreasonable, and certain resolutions as false, and he had used other language which was certainly unparliamentary. They had found the hon. gentleman, on another occasion, calling in question the votes and proceedings of the House, and he (the Speaker) thought that that, too, was scarcely justifiable or within the rules of the House. For his own part, he refused to be lectured by that hon. gentleman, or to accept his *ipse dixit*, as to what was or was not objectionable. He was willing to leave his utterances to the opinion of the House and of the country. He knew very well that everything from that side of the House was considered objectionable by the Commissioner of Public Works, and that when any motion was brought forward reflecting on the conduct of the Government that gentleman relied on his supporters to vote it down, which they accordingly did. They very often found the supporters of the Government kicking resolutions offered from that side out of the House and very shortly afterwards supporting the Government in adopting the principles of such resolutions. With regard to the resolution under discussion, he thought the Government should bring their influence to bear on the printers and have the public accounts ready at as early a day as possible.

Mr. MOWAT—We are doing that; we are pressing them hard.

Mr. MACDOUGALL said, on the strength of that assurance by the leader of the Government, he hoped his hon. friend for North Grey (Mr. Creighton) would not press the resolution.

Mr. FRASER said that fortunately liberty of speech was a right allowed to the humblest member of the House, and notwithstanding the remonstrances of the hon. member for South Simcoe, he (Mr. Fraser) would exercise that right freely in criticising the utterances of that hon. gentleman so long as he kept within the rules of Parliament. (Hear, hear.) Unfortunately too, for that hon. gentleman, it was not in his (Mr. Macdougall's) power to prevent the exercise of that right, or to prevent any member from calling his remarks objectionable, if they were considered to be of that character they all knew how anxious that gentleman was to be regarded as invariably speaking *ex cathedra*. He seemed to think, forsooth, that because of his Parliamentary and other experience, everything he said was beyond denial or question; that when he condescended to make a statement nobody ought to dispute it, because he fancied that in so denying or so questioning his assertions they were ruffling his dignity and coming between him and the reputation of infallibility he was himself so fond of sustaining, but regarding which, unfortunately, there was some difference of opinion among others than himself. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) So long as he (Mr. Fraser) had a seat in the House he would venture when he differed from that hon. gentleman's opinion to tell wherein that difference consisted; and to tell him before his face, when he could defend himself, and not when he was absent from his seat. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) That the hon. member for South Simcoe should undertake to tell them—and he did so over and over again in his oblique way—that because he had long experience in Parliament, because he considered himself an authority on Parliamentary practice, that they must not dispute his statements or call his opinions in question was a piece of such amazing audacity—or if the hon. gentleman considered that unparliamentary he would say such an amazing piece of boldness (hear, hear, and laughter) that he (Mr. Fraser) was surprised to find even the member for South Simcoe assuming such a position. (Laughter.) It was the right of any member, however humble, to refuse to be dictated to by even that hon. gentleman, and to challenge even his statements if they were incorrect.

Mr. MACDOUGALL—Nobody denies that.

Mr. FRASER said that if nobody denied that, he would like to know why the hon. gentleman whined (he hoped that was not unparliamentary, it meant to cry) when that right was asserted. (Hear, hear.) It was rather strange, too, that an hon. gentleman who was so ready to quote May, who laid down so decidedly what was regular and what was irregular, who called upon Mr. Speaker to exercise his authority, should protect him, and should himself in this very debate have violated a parliamentary rule which was very strongly insisted upon by all the authorities, viz.: the one which prohibited a reference to a previous debate. (Hear, hear.) Not only so, but the hon. gentleman had misrepresented—he would not say wilfully, but so high an authority should not misrepresent, even unintentionally (hear, hear, and laughter)—his hon. friend the Attorney-General in an argument that hon. gentleman had used. The leader of the Government had not said that it would be a breach of the Constitution to bring these reports down earlier, but he had argued that it was a Constitutional practice, old as well as new, that these reports should first be presented to the people's representatives in Parliament assembled. (Hear, hear.) These reports were made to the Lieutenant-Governor; by the theory of the Constitution they were made secretly, and they were sent down to Parliament by His Honour's orders.

Mr. MACDOUGALL—Well, send them down; that's what we ask.

Mr. FRASER said that the resolution asked more than that. It asked that when Parliament was not sitting, when its members were nothing more in the eye of the constitution than private citizens, these