

CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

Wednesday, January 31, 1923

SECOND SESSION, FOURTEENTH PARLIAMENT—OPENING

The parliament which had been prorogued from time to time to the 31st day of January, 1923, met this day at Ottawa for the despatch of business.

The House met at three o'clock, the Speaker in the Chair.

HOUR OF MEETING

CHANGE IN THE RULE SUGGESTED BY Mr. SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: Under rule 2 the House should have met at 2 o'clock to-day; but as the letter received from the Governor General stated that His Excellency would proceed to open parliament at 3 o'clock, I have come to the conclusion that there would be less inconvenience for everyone concerned if I applied the spirit rather than the letter of the law. I have no doubt that it was the government's intention that the House should meet at 3 o'clock to-day. The rule says that the time for the ordinary meeting on Wednesday should be at 2 o'clock. It may be that opening day is not an ordinary meeting day. At any rate I am satisfied to put such a construction on the rule under the present circumstances. The question came up in 1918 when the House met at 11 o'clock on Monday, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier then made the following remark:

We meet under conditions of some peculiar novelty. We do not meet under the rules of the House because those rules say that this House shall meet at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. We do not meet under the proclamation of His Excellency the Governor-General, because the Governor-General, while fixing the date of the meeting of Parliament, did not fix the hour. Of course, parliament, though elected by the people, has to be called by the Governor-General. It is within His Excellency's privilege to summon it at any time he pleases, and to fix the hour also. It has pleased him to call parliament for the 18th March, but he has not fixed the hour. He might have said that we should meet at 11 o'clock of the morning or at the same hour in the evening, and we would have to obey his command. I think, therefore, that under such circumstances the House is irregularly called.

The Governor General's proclamation does not state at what hour parliament is to meet. Since the House is to meet to-day, it has to do so in accordance with its rules which state that on Wednesday it should meet at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

As Speaker it is my duty to see that the rules which the House has adopted for its proceedings be observed. I do not think they should be infringed upon, and I would suggest that rule 2 be amended so that the government be given a free hand to open parliament at any time it may deem it advisable in the future.

Mr. SPEAKER read a communication from Mr. A. F. Sladen, Governor General's Secretary, announcing that His Excellency the Governor General would proceed to the Senate chamber at three p.m. on this day, for the purpose of formally opening the session of the Dominion parliament.

A message was delivered by Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, as follows:

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And the House being returned to the Commons chamber:

VACANCIES

Mr. SPEAKER: I have the honour to inform the House that during the recess I received communications from several members notifying me that the following vacancies had occurred in the representation, viz:

Of Marie Joseph Demers, Esquire, member for the electoral district of St. Johns and Iberville, consequent upon the acceptance of an office of emolument under the Crown.

Of Hon. William Costello Kennedy, member for the electoral district of the North Riding of Essex, by decease.

I accordingly issued my warrants to the Chief Electoral Officer to make out new writs of election for the said electoral districts respectively.