

would be prorogued on the 13th August, stating, as he affirms, in the most distinct terms, that the "re-assembly of Parliament on that day would be pro formâ, that no business would be done beyond the reception of the Report of the Committee, which could then be printed with the evidence, and go before the country; that the members would not be required to return, and that only the Speakers of the two Houses need be in their places." The only observation elicited by this announcement proceeded from Mr. Holton, an Opposition member, who remarked "that to do any business there must be a quorum, and that he and a quorum would be there;" to which Sir John informs me he replied, that "if a quorum was necessary, a sufficient number of members would be found in the neighbourhood of Ottawa,"—a quorum consisting of the Speaker and nineteen others. It was upon this understanding, Sir John assures me, that the House consented to adjourn, and in confirmation of his assertion he has communicated to me the subjoined letter from Mr. Palmer, the member for St. John:—

"Sir,

"St. John, August 11, 1873.

"In consequence of statements that I understand have come from some members of the Commons to the effect that there might be an actual Session of Parliament at the adjournment on the 13th, to you, as the leader of the Government, I beg to make the following statement by way of protest.

"I have to remind you that the House of Commons only consented to adjourn to that time on your pledge openly given in the House that no business should be transacted, nor would the attendance of members be required, as there would be enough around Ottawa to make a quorum; that Mr. Speaker would receive the Report of the Committee on the Huntington charges, so that it might be published, and that then Parliament would be at once prorogued.

"If this promise had not been made, I do not believe the House would have consented to any such adjournment. I certainly would not have given my consent to any adjournment that would have put the country to an expense of a quarter of a million dollars by bringing the Legislature together again.

"At all events, be that as it may, I feel that it would be dishonourable for myself to attempt to do business at an adjournment of the House, at which my colleagues had been told that no business would be done, and that they need not attend, and therefore I must decline to do so; and I protest at any attempt to do business, and I require the Government to fulfil the pledge made to me and to every member of the House, that Parliament would be at once prorogued.

"While I do this, I do not wish to interfere in any way with the right of the Government to call Parliament together whenever they think the exigencies of the country require it; they must be the judges of that, and be responsible for it; but let that be done in the usual way, that all may understand that it is their duty to attend; and when I, together with all my colleagues, am so called upon, I trust that I shall be found in my place, and I shall then feel that whether or not all my colleagues attend, they will not have been kept away by a pledge that they would not be required, and I could therefore honourably join in doing anything that the House might consider for the interests of the country.

"I have the honour to be, &c.,

"Sir John Macdonald,
"Minister of Justice, Ottawa."

"A. L. PALMER,
"Member for the City and County of St. John.

As far as my opinion is concerned, I am quite clear that it was the desire and expectation of Parliament that prorogation should take place at the time mentioned. Every member must have known that Sir John's announcement on the subject was an intimation of the pleasure of the Crown through its official organ in the House, and that the Prime Minister could only have made it after receiving my authority to do so. Formerly, the intentions of the Sovereign on this subject were conveyed to either Chamber by a written message, but though a verbal communication through the First Minister has been now substituted, it does not render this latter mode of communication less formal or official. Had therefore the House of Commons desired to prolong the Session beyond the 13th of August, its proper course would have been to have communicated its wishes to me by an Address. Though the fact that no motion to this effect was even suggested is sufficiently conclusive, there are other circumstances which indicate more or less distinctly the feeling of the House. The motion originally appointing the Committee, and carried on the 8th of April, ordered it to sit, "if need were, after prorogation," and more than one member of the Opposition urged the propriety of a Bill being introduced to enable it to do so. Clearly therefore, when this motion was carried and these suggestions made, the majority