

GOVT WILL GO ON WITH BUSINESS OF COUNTRY

Many Messages Received by Premier Borden Express Sympathy For Great Loss Canada Has Sustained -- Many Scenes and Friendships, Hidden by Curtain of the Past, Recalled to Memory of Older Members by Thursday Night's Disaster.

An Opportunity to Show World Spirit of Determination Which Animates Canadian People; Sir Robert Borden Says—New and More Splendid Building on Parliament Hill.

Ottawa, Feb. 4.—"It was a good example of the Canadian spirit of determination, if we proceed at once with the public business and carry on our work without any unnecessary delay," Sir Robert Borden said at the opening of the House of Commons on Thursday night.

"We should go on at once with the business of the country," Sir Wilfrid Laurier said.

These declarations, uttered under the shadow of disaster and of death, mark the determination of the government and of parliament to proceed with the business of the country in such temporary and partial accommodation as can be provided.

The House met today in the auditorium of the Victoria Memorial Museum, a spacious theatre which will serve as the commons chamber for the rest of the session, and may be used also by the senate, sitting in the mornings.

The scene presented in the assembly of this extraordinary sitting stands probably without parallel in the history of legislatures. The auditorium had been hastily transformed by officials of the public works department into the semblance of a legislative chamber. Some few pieces of furniture had been saved from the senate wing, including the massive chair occupied by H. R. H. the Governor-General. This chair was placed upon the stage of the speaker, the stage itself was draped with flags, and carpeted, and in the body of the hall seats had been arranged for the members, with desks for the prime minister and the leader of the opposition.

In the lobby of the museum building the members gathered for the meeting of the House. Without office, committee rooms, or lockers they stood around and waited for the customary bell, but there was no bell.

Instead the sergeant-at-arms shouldered the mace saved from the senate—the commons mace is gone—and walked into the theatre followed by Speaker Severy. The little procession which is wont to proceed in much state from the speaker's apartments, was made up in the lobby. The speaker, in his customary robes of black silk and his three-cornered hat, wore a borrowed suit of tweeds and no hat at all. He took his seat on the stage and opened the sitting.

The members grouped themselves to the right and left of the hall, and a large crowd of spectators, house attendants, etc., thronged the gallery running round the auditorium.

A Memorable Occasion

The sitting lasted for thirty-five minutes only, but it will be remembered always by those who took part in it or witnessed it. The leaders and members of the House labored under profound feeling. The disaster of the night was still in their minds, and before them was the empty chair of one of those who had gone. Sir Robert Borden, whose own escape from the burning building had been a narrow one, spoke of the catastrophe with deep emotion, particularly in his reference to the loss of life, and to the destruction of "a great historic monument." Even more marked was the emotion with which the opposition leader joined in the tribute of condolence to those who had been bereaved, and in reference to the stately building which had been, in a true sense, his home for forty years. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's voice wavered and broke as he spoke of the two young women whose lives had been given up in the fire, "young, happy wives, young, happy mothers, bright as the larks in the blue sky of the morning."

Apart from the speeches of the two leaders, the House did no business, except the formal adoption of the resolution which had been under debate at the time of the fire, a motion by Mr. Clarence Jameson, of Digby, for an investigation with a view to the development of a home market for fish.

The House then adjourned until Monday.

"We meet today under the shadow of a great calamity," said Sir Robert Borden, at the opening of the House.

"We are apparently called upon to mourn the death of a brother member, whose voice had been heard in the House of Commons only a few hours before the event occurred which drove us from the precincts. I have been associated for a number of years with Mr. Law as a fellow member of the House of Commons, and I am with the greatest possible regret that I voice the apprehension that he may have perished in the destruction of the parliament buildings last evening. He was a man of kindly and gentle disposition, and of indefatigable industry in connection with his public duties, and was listened to with attention and respect when he rose to address the House. Hon. gentlemen of both sides of the House will I now, join in conveying to those who are bereaved our very deepest and most heartfelt sympathy in the loss which they have sustained."

"But it is not alone his death which we have to mourn. Two gentle and accomplished ladies, who were the guests of the Speaker of the House in the event of the same disaster. I had not the honor and privilege of their acquaintance, but I know how deep must be the loss which has been sustained by the House to express also on behalf of the House our very deep and sincere sympathy with the families of those who have been bereaved."

"But this does not end the toll of the loss, because it is apparent, from all that we can learn, that a very highly esteemed officer of the House, also lost his life in the event of last evening. Mr. Laplante became assistant clerk of the House very shortly after I became a member of parliament, and it is not too much to say that the House of Commons never had a more capable and more industrious officer. I am sure that members on both sides of the House will join also in expressing the deepest regret to the family and friends of Mr. Laplante. We all realize how great the loss his death has occasioned to the effective organization and work of the House."

"It appears further that some of the employees of the House have lost their lives in the disaster of last evening. I believe that they are engaged in the performance of their duties, seeking to stay the progress of the fire in some parts of the basement. I have no accurate or official account of how it took place, but I have a report from one who told me that he was an eyewitness of what occurred. He said that these employees were cut off by the falling in of the roof, so that he, preceding them by the falling debris and saw them no more. They lost their lives in the discharge of their duty, striving to do what they could to stay the progress of the flames, and to take every possible precaution for the safety of the members of the House."

"I am sure that members on both sides of the House will also, I am sure every member of the House will extend his heartfelt sympathy. Where Destiny of Country Was Shaped.

"As to the historic building itself, my own association with it has now extended over a period of nearly twenty years. My right hon. friend on the other side of the House has been associated with it for more than twice that period. The building dates from the very earliest years of Confederation or even before Confederation. In that chamber the great policies were debated and decided out which have touched the development of our country and its future destiny. In that chamber the great men who founded this confederation spoke and did their duty as representatives of the people in parliament, from the inception of Confederation through the active period of their lifetime."

"The destruction of the building is the loss of a great historic monument. I believe that the chamber of the old clock tower was prepared for the reception of the clock in 1877. Some one has handed to me an extract from the report of the department of public works for that year which recounts that the clock chamber of the tower had been placed in position to receive the clock from Messrs. Dent & Company of London, England, and that the new library had been finished and occupied. The clock held its own until the very last; it struck nine, ten, eleven, and made a brave but unsuccessful attempt to strike the midnight hour. When that tower fell, a monument had been conspicuous in Ottawa

there it spread, with the greatest rapidity, up the corridors of the House and through the second floor, such dense and suffocating volumes of smoke preceding the actual fire as prevented all efforts effectively to fight the fire from the inside. Many members and officers and employees of the house were unable even to get their hats and overcoats.

"The fire first destroyed the house and its offices, and then spread rapidly to the senate chamber, except insofar as they may have been damaged by water. The firemen, the officers of the library and the Ottawa garrison worked most strenuously and a large number of volumes were removed, with aid of the military motor lorries, and placed in the government garage.

"This complete loss was due to the extraordinary rapidity with which the fire spread through the lobbies and corridors, the columns of smoke were of wood and also the smoke which made it quite impossible for any person to enter the upper parts of the House. It may be possible that some of the members of the House, saved, as from the external appearance of the windows one or two rooms appear to have escaped very serious injury, but it is impossible at the present time to make any exacting estimate of the loss of the House of Commons mace is missing."

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"What we may do by another session we do not yet know. I have asked my right hon. friend, the leader of the opposition, to accompany me this afternoon to the new commons building, with a view of considering whether or not, by stopping the work now proceeding there, and by somewhat modifying the interior of the building, for the time being, we might not be able to provide there a home for parliament until a new and more convenient and suitable, and more splendid building, is erected on the site of the old commons building. Now we know his body is in that mass of ruins."

"We had at the table an officer, who had been for very nearly twenty years a faithful servant of the House of Commons, a man whom everyone had learned to appreciate, whose courtesy, ability, activity, and kindness every member had learned to appreciate. How he disappeared we do not know, but unfortunately there is no hope that we will be able to see him again in life. And what have we to say, sir, of the loss of those two young ladies, young happy wives, young happy mothers, bright as the larks in the

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