

The **PRIME MINISTER** (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) moved the adjournment of the House.

Motion agreed to, and the House adjourned at 4.10 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MONDAY, 20th March, 1899.

The **SPEAKER** took the Chair at Three o'clock.

PRAYERS.

ADDRESS IN ANSWER TO HIS EXCELLENCY'S SPEECH.

The **PRIME MINISTER** (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) moved :

That the Order for the consideration of the motion for an Address to His Excellency the Governor General, in reply to his Speech at the opening of the session, have precedence over all other business except the introduction of Bills until disposed of.

Motion agreed to.

The House then proceeded to the consideration of His Excellency's speech.

Mr. JOHN H. BELL (Prince East, P.E.I.)
Mr. Speaker, I rise for the purpose of moving the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne. I am sensible of the honour that has been conferred upon me and upon the constituency I have the honour to represent in that I have been chosen for the purpose of performing this important duty. But at the same time, I cannot help the thought that a person to perform this duty properly would require a certain degree of parliamentary experience—that it should be performed by some one who has given at least a small portion of his lifetime to the consideration and study of federal politics. However, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the indulgence of this honourable House—not as a mere matter of form—while I proceed as best I can to execute the task assigned to me, while I venture, as it were, upon an untried and unknown sea.

The first part of my duty is very simple. No man can plead ignorance of the present state of the prosperity of Canada. No one is ignorant of it but the man who wilfully closes his eyes to the light. The first evidence of that prosperity referred to in the Speech from the Throne is in the statement regarding the increasing volume of our trade. By the reports of the year 1896, the volume of our trade is represented by \$239,000,000; I look at the returns for the year

1898, and I find it represented by \$304,000,000. That is to say, in two short years, we have increased the volume of the trade of Canada to the extent of \$65,000,000 annually. And, if comparisons at this stage of the discussion are not altogether odious, I would like to point out that in 1878 the volume of our trade was represented by \$172,000,000, while in 1896, as I have said, it was represented by \$239,000,000, an increase of \$67,000,000 in eighteen years. Hence it is manifest that the Liberal party of Canada have increased the volume of our trade in two years to the same extent substantially that our friends the Conservatives have taken eighteen long years to accomplish. That is a condition of things of which the Liberal party of Canada may well be proud. But that is not all. We have the returns of the last eight months before us, and these indicate that not only have we kept pace with the extraordinary development of the trade of last year, but we have this year, in addition, increased the volume of that trade during the eight months by twelve million dollars more. At the close of the present financial year, therefore, we shall undoubtedly find that the increase in our annual trade at the end of the three years will be represented not by \$65,000,000, but by \$80,000,000.

Let me, Mr. Speaker, make another comparison. Let me contrast our record with that of the United States. Looking over the trade returns of the United States, I find that during the last ten years the increase in the volume of their trade has been about 30 per cent, while during the same period the increase in Canadian trade has been about 51 per cent. But I wish to point to a more astonishing circumstance still. If we glance at the trade returns of the United States, we find that they increased their trade by \$33,000,000 during the fiscal year ending the first of July last. But during the same period our increase of trade is measured by \$47,000,000. Supposing that we stood upon the same footing as they, supposing we had equal population and wealth, that showing would be a highly creditable one for Canada. When we come, however, to consider that we have but a fourteenth part of the population of the United States and probably an equal proportion in wealth, then we may begin to realize the tremendous strides in the volume of trade that we have taken during this last year. Then will begin to dawn upon us this great truth, that in so far as the volume of trade is an indication of the prosperity of a country, Canada, during the past year, has enjoyed a commercial prosperity more than twenty times as great as that of the United States. It would be well for us to bear in mind—at least those of us who entertain the impression and hug the delusion that Canada is dependent on the trade of the United States for her prosperity—to ask ourselves the question, how it could be possible, under present conditions, for the United States to communicate to us a