

throughout Canada. I shall be very pleased to support the resolution to have this matter discussed before the Marine and Fisheries Committee.

At this time Mr. C. R. Stewart, Chief Doorkeeper of the House of Commons, came hurriedly into the Chamber and called out: "There is a big fire in the reading room; everybody get out quickly." The sitting was immediately suspended without formality, and members, officials, and visitors in the galleries, fled from the Chamber. Some of them were almost overcome by the rapidly-advancing smoke and flames before reaching a place of safety. The fire, which had originated in the reading room, gained momentum with extreme rapidity and was soon beyond control. It continued till the following day, resulting in the almost total destruction of the Parliament buildings, together with the loss of several lives.

#### Friday, February 4, 1916.

The House met at Three o'clock, at the Victoria Memorial Museum, the Speaker in the Chair.

#### THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS BY FIRE.

On the Orders of the Day:

Right Hon. Sir ROBERT BORDEN: Mr. Speaker, we meet to-day under the shadow of a great calamity. It is most deplorable that the unfortunate occurrence of last evening should have been attended with loss of life. We are evidently 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 all from the precincts of the building. I have been associated for a number of years with Mr. Law as a fellow member of the House of Commons, and with the greatest possible regret 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 genial disposition and of indefatigable industry in connection with all his public duties. He was always listened to with attention and respect when he rose to address the House. Hon. gentlemen on both sides of the House will, I know, join in conveying to those who are bereaved our very deepest and most heartfelt sympathy in the loss which they have sustained.

[Mr. Loggie.]

But it is not alone the death of this our fellow member that we have to mourn. Two gentle and accomplished ladies who were the guests of the Speaker of this House, unfortunately perished in the same disaster. I had not the honour and privilege of their acquaintance, but I know how deep must be the loss which has been sustained by the husband and family in each case. I venture to express also on behalf of the House our very deep and sincere sympathy with the families of those who have been thus unexpectedly and terribly 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 calamity of last evening. Mr. Laplante became Assistant Clerk of the House very shortly after I entered Parliament, and it is not too much to say that the House of Commons never had a more capable, more industrious or more faithful officer. I am sure that members on both sides of the House will join in expressing also the deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Mr. Laplante. His death is an almost irreparable loss to the effective organization and work of the House.

It appears further that three of the employees of the House lost their lives in the disaster of last evening. I believe that they were engaged in the performance of their duty, seeking to stay the progress of the fire in some part 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 a little, was separated from 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. To the families of these men also I am sure every member of the House will extend his heartfelt sympathy.

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 Cham-