

have no doubt that the sad event will be appropriately referred to on Monday next, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to, and House adjourned at 8.20 p.m.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MONDAY, March 6, 1905.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

FIRST READING.

Bill (No. 98) to incorporate the Imperial Guarantee and Accident Insurance Company of Canada.—Mr. Belcourt.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTHWEST—PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN (Carleton, Ont.). Before the Orders of the Day are called, I wish to inquire of the government whether or not there are to be any changes made in the Bills that have been introduced by the Prime Minister for the establishment of new provinces in the Northwest Territories? I venture to mention this because I see in newspapers that are supposed to be in the confidence of the government, rumours—nay more than rumours, direct statements—that there are to be certain changes made in the provisions of these Bills. In connection with this matter, it seems to me that the practice followed by the Prime Minister with regard to these Bills, and also the Grand Trunk Pacific Bill of two years ago, is not a practice supported by any competent authority. I refer to the practice of introducing a Bill with which the House is not at all familiar, and proceeding to debate it in a manner which is usual only upon the second reading. I am aware, of course, that it is not only perfectly proper, but that it is usual to make a succinct statement explanatory of the provisions of a Bill upon its first reading, but I do not find any authority for proceeding to debate a Bill upon its first reading, before the measure is laid before the House in printed form and before the House has had an opportunity of becoming familiar with its provisions. I am well aware that it was the intention of the government to have favoured me personally with a copy of the Bill some little time in advance of its introduction; but, unfortunately, for reasons which were no doubt beyond the control of the government, that intention was not carried out, and I received the Bill only about the time the Prime Minister rose to introduce it. But even if I had received the Bill say twenty-four hours in advance, as might perhaps have been very

Sir WILLIAM MULOCK.

proper under the circumstances, that would not have afforded an opportunity to other members of the House who are equally interested with myself in discussing the measure, if it was to be discussed at that stage, to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the scope and meaning of the provisions of the Bill before proceeding to discuss it. I mention this because it seems to me that if this practice is to be followed by the government in the future in regard to important measures of this kind, it would be well to have each Bill printed two or three days in advance of its introduction, so that, if there is to be a discussion on the first reading, the House can proceed intelligently with that discussion, and can have an opportunity beforehand of giving the Bill that consideration which, of course, is absolutely necessary to a measure of this kind.

Now, I have asked as to changes in the Bill. If they have not come to any conclusion with regard to changes in the Bill; if they have not come to any conclusion up to the present time, I would very respectfully suggest to the Prime Minister that, if any changes of importance are to be made in the provisions of this Bill before the second reading is reached, it would be highly in the interest of the members who will have to discuss the measure, and indeed would be very much in the interest of the country as a whole, that the Prime Minister should acquaint the House with the nature of those changes a reasonable time before the second reading is brought on. I have no doubt that the right hon. gentleman will assent to this as a reasonable request, and that it will be complied with.

Let me add just one word of personal explanation with regard to myself. I do not usually trouble the House with very much personal explanation about statements with regard to myself in the public press; but there have been a number of suggestions or statements made as to my recent absence from the House which I think must proceed upon an entire misunderstanding. I quote only one of these, which is not couched perhaps in a very offensive form, but which conveys a suggestion which is absolutely untrue:

That the constant factors in our politics are not wholly unknown to some of our Conservative friends the tactful absence of Mr. Borden from Ottawa at this juncture abundantly illustrates.

And so on in other journals, some of the suggestions being couched in a somewhat more impertinent form than that which I have just read. I had no intention of absenting myself from the city of Ottawa up to four o'clock of the afternoon of last Wednesday week, when I received a telegram announcing the sudden death of a very near and dear relative under very distressing circumstances. On the following