

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN (East York). Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with, I desire to direct the attention of the House to the present situation in Ontario; and, in order that I may put myself within the rules of the House, I intend to conclude with a motion. In the Canada 'Gazette' of Saturday, the following announcement occurs:

Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

His Excellency the Governor General has been pleased to make the following appointments, viz.:

March 26, 1903.

The Honourable Charles Moss, Chief Justice of Ontario, to be the administrator of the province of Ontario for the purpose of assenting to such bills as may be required during the present session of the legislature of Ontario, of assenting to the Bills passed by such legislature at the close of the session; and of proroguing the present session of the legislative assembly of Ontario.

I take this opportunity of asking the right hon. gentleman who leads the House to state to whom has been assigned the other high duties that are attached to the office of Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, like all other lieutenant governors, exercises other prerogatives of the Crown than those mentioned in the 'Gazette,' and so far as we know, they are left to some one else. Now, I believe that the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario is very ill, and somebody must be discharging those other duties. Let me point out from one of the authorities what is included in the other duties of the lieutenant governor. At page 30 of 'Confederation Law of Canada,' by Wheeler, it is stated:

The Executive Council of Ontario and of Quebec shall be composed of such persons as the Lieutenant Governor from time to time thinks fit.

and so on. A serious political crisis exists in the province of Ontario; grave charges have been made against ministers of the Crown and are now under discussion in the Ontario legislature; and in view of the fact that the government have confessed that the lieutenant governor is unable to discharge three of his duties, and have appointed somebody else to discharge them, I want to know who is discharging these other duties, and passing upon the fitness of the ministers of the Crown. Let me quote another authority, Mr. Goldwin Smith, who the other day made the following statement:

Mr. Ross, it has always been maintained in these columns, had much better after the general election have met without delay the legislature which he had called, taken a decisive vote, and thereupon made up his mind whether he was in a position to carry on the government. He preferred, as a matter of party tactics, to fight the battle out in the elec-

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tion courts, and in such by-elections as might ensue. He thereby manifestly exposed the province to a reign of intrigue and corruption, as well as to an extraordinary outburst of party rancour. He now sees the result. It is much worse for him than even a defeat upon an appeal to the legislature would have been. In that case he would at all events have retained the confidence and support of a united party. As it is, he is threatened with total wreck.

I am not raising a political question, but I want to show what Mr. Goldwin Smith's position is. He goes on to say:

The proper arbiter of the course to be taken by the ministers in such circumstances as these is the lieutenant governor. By him the ministers are appointed, and he is responsible to the province for their integrity. It is very unfortunate if, as is stated, he is incapacitated by sickness for the performance of his functions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think I have made out that the lieutenant governor has been considered by the Governor in Council here to be incompetent to discharge certain of his functions, and that there are other high functions which require to be discharged at this moment; and I take this opportunity of asking the right hon. First Minister whether these other functions have been assigned to any one. I have not the slightest intention to reflect on his honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. I have the highest respect for him. I am rising here solely from a conception of my public duty. I think I speak for the people of Ontario, for constitutional practice, and for a majority of the members from Ontario of this House, without claiming to speak for them from a party point of view; and I ask the Prime Minister to tell the House and the country what he is doing in connection with the present serious situation in the province of Ontario. I move that the House do now adjourn.

The PRIME MINISTER (Rt. Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier). Some few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend sent me word that he intended to bring before the House the condition of the health of his honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. I would have much preferred that my hon. friend had agreed to the suggestion I made in reply, that he would defer doing so until tomorrow, on the motion to go into Committee of Supply. However, for reasons I shall not discuss, he did not see fit to accede to my request. One of the reasons which induced me to ask my hon. friend not to bring the question before the House at this moment was that if he had granted me the privilege I asked, I would have written at once to Sir Oliver Mowat for permission to read to the House a letter which I received from him, and which was the cause of the recommendation I made a few days ago to His Excellency to appoint an administrator for certain purposes. In the absence of such permission, there are in this letter some personal matters which I would