

FRASER RESIGNS.

Legislative Chamber, Feb. 28.

HON. MR. FRASER TO RETIRE.

Just as the orders of the day were called the Attorney-General rose and made the announcement mentioned above, of the retirement of the Commissioner of Public Works. Sir Oliver said:—I have an announcement to make which I am sure will be received on both sides of the House with regret, though not perhaps with surprise by any. I mean that my friend and colleague, the Commissioner of Public Works, has found it necessary from the state of his health, and acting on medical advice, to place in my hands his resignation as a member of the Government and as Commissioner of Public Works. It is three months since he announced to me the impossibility of his continuing by reason of the condition of his health; and his resignation practically took place then, though at the request of myself and his other colleagues he has continued to discharge in such measure as he could his official duties. My hon. friend's falling health has long been known. On account of it, three years ago or more he intimated to me his wish to be relieved from his public and official duties, and the labor, responsibility and care which belonged to them; and my hon. friend repeated to me this expression of his wish several times previous to his final announcement of three months ago. On these previous occasions I had deemed it my duty in the public interest to ask my hon. friend to postpone his resignation in the hope of better health, however slight he might himself think the prospect to be; and I assured him on behalf of all his colleagues that we greatly appreciated his services to the Province, and should in every practicable way lighten his duties and leave him to look after his health as he might be advised or might desire. This assurance has been carried out. One session of the Legislature he was in consequence absent from the Province, and during other sessions he has not been able to take, and has not taken, that active part in the debates and other proceedings of the House to which he had been accustomed. We were specially anxious that he should remain with us if he could until after these new Parliamentary and departmental buildings were wholly completed, within as well as without, and until after all accounts relating to them were settled. The buildings are completed now, and, all admit, will be a lasting monument of my hon. friend's ability, efficiency and economy as Minister of Public Works. (Applause.) We were also anxious to have such assistance from him during the present session as his health would permit, in reference especially to matters belonging to the department over which he has presided so ably and for so many years, and to this he has consented. I have been very reluctant to part with my esteemed colleague. He was elected to this House in the same year as myself; his first session was my first session; and he has been my colleague in the Government for twenty years, a longer period than anyone else who has been associated with me in the Government. Not one of those who were our colleagues at the time of his appointment is amongst our colleagues now; all have passed away. I have pleasure in saying that my hon. friend has had the confidence and esteem both of all who were his colleagues in the past and of all who are his colleagues now. He has been invaluable in his department, and has been invaluable also in Council as regards the many and varied subjects which from week to week come up in Council for consideration and action; and his governmental usefulness has increased as his experience has increased, as is the case with every hard-working and conscientious minister. Possessing a clear, incisive and active intellect; able to look on all sides of every question on which he has to act or advise; having a retentive memory, and a ready and forcible utterance; a powerful debater in the House, and a no less powerful speaker on the public platform; a man of uncommon energy and force of character, and devoted to the public interests, his retirement from public life I regard as a great loss, not only to his colleagues and his party, but to the whole country irrespective of party. (Loud applause.) I hope, and I have no doubt that the hope is shared by all, that without overtaxing himself he may be able to give some assistance in the business of the House during this, his last session, and that he may have some years yet of comfort and usefulness in the discharge of quieter and less disturbing duties than those which belong to political life. (Applause.)

By the consent of his Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, my hon. friend is holding office until his successor is appointed, and his responsibility is for such Governmental action and such Governmental measures only as he sees his way to concur in, other Governmental matters being as to him open questions.

MR. MEREDITH'S REMARKS.

Mr. Meredith said the announcement of the Attorney-General was somewhat unusual in its character, especially in regard to the point with which he had closed his remarks. He went with the Attorney-General, and as far as anyone could possibly go, in expressing the deepest regret that the state of health of the Commissioner of Public Works was such as would necessitate the resignation of the hon. gentleman. Although in the House he had been opposed to the Commissioner from the year he had entered it, and although there had been bitter controversies between them, he could say personally, and he thought all on his side of the House would agree with him, that the Commissioner of Public Works had been held in the highest esteem. As a public man, as a legislator, as a debater, members on his side of the House all recognized his talents and regretted very much the reasons which had induced him to take this action. He joined with the Attorney-General in the hope that rest and quiet would have the effect of restoring the hon. gentleman to health, and he should hope that some important position somewhere in the public service could be provided for the hon. gentleman, where he could still find opportunities for the exercise of his abilities. He should hope some means could be found for bringing this about. Now, he did not like upon such an occasion as this to refer to the public aspect of the event announced, but he thought he was bound to do so, in view of some of the observations of the Attorney-General. The Commissioner of Public Works was to remain a member of the Government, and was to be responsible only for such measures as he might approve of. It seemed to him that this was an anomalous condition of things to prevail in a country governed constitutionally. All the members of a Cabinet must be united on the questions that come before it. Any other system would be destructive of the principles of constitutional government. It had been said that the Commissioner of Public Works differed from his colleagues on different important questions. The public should be informed if this was so, and the cause of his differences with his colleagues. He would, however, repeat that he regretted sincerely the ground on which the Commissioner of Public Works had found it necessary to leave the service of the country.

THE COURSE CONSTITUTIONAL.

The Attorney-General said he would like to make a few observations on Mr. Meredith's remarks. The leader of the Opposition would find, if he read carefully the authorities on the question, that it is a constitutional rule that there may be open questions in the Government. There was a vast number of illustrations of the truth of this, which would be found in the authorities on the subject. In the course of action taken the Government was working in accordance with a recognized constitutional rule. As to what those questions might be on which the Commissioner of Public Works might differ from his colleagues, if such questions should be submitted to the House the Commissioner would himself state those differences.

Mr. Meredith—Will those differences come before the House?

The Attorney-General—I am not aware of any differences that will not come before the House.

Subsequently the Attorney-General rose and made some modification of this last remark. He referred to the words he had used, and went on to say that unless such differences should occur in regard to questions that would come before the House a statement by the Government would be unnecessary. There had been from time to time slight differences of opinion between himself and various of his colleagues on matters that had not come before the House. The Attorney-General closed by saying that he would rather say that if

the Commissioner of Public Works differed from his colleagues on any important political matter the House would be informed.

A TIMBER QUESTION.

Mr. Wood (Hastings) moved for an order of the House for a return of copies of all correspondence in connection with an application for a supply of timber for a local sawmill in the Township of Tyendinaga, in the County of Hastings, by Mr. Fraser Chisholm of the said township.

Mr. Wood gave an outline of the circumstances complained of. Mr. Chisholm was the possessor of this sawmill, and