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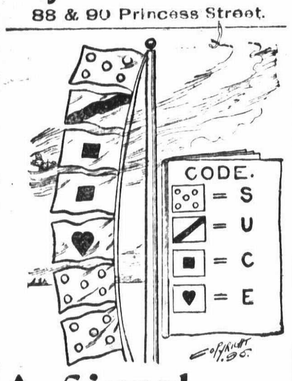

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THEIR REASONS.

Mr. Foster Explains Why the Ministers Resigned.

OPPOSED TO PREMIER BOWELL

Sir Richard Cartwright's Criticism of Mr. Foster's Explanation—Charges Against Dr. Montague.

Ottawa, Jan. 7.—(Special.)—When the three new members had been introduced to the House of Commons and the preliminary business had been disposed of, Sir Adolphe Caron, amid a profound silence, arose and said :—

Sir Adolphe Caron—Mr. Speaker, before the orders of the day are called I have an important statement to make to the House. Since the opening of Parliament seven members of the Cabinet have tendered their resignations to the Prime Minister, which were submitted to the Governor-General and accepted by his Excellency. The gentlemen whose resignations have thus been accepted are :—Mr. George E. Foster, Minister of Finance ; Mr. John Haggart, Minister of Railways and Canals ; Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, Minister of Justice ; Mr. William Bullock Ives, Minister of Trade and Commerce ; Mr. Arthur R. Dickey, Minister of Militia and Defence ; Mr. Walter H. Montague, Minister of Agriculture, and Mr. John F. Wood, Controller of Customs. At the next meeting of the House I hope to be in a position to state definitely what course the Government has taken or intends to take under these circumstances. (Ironical hear, hears.) Considering the gravity of the situation I have to ask that when the House adjourns to-day, of course I am aware that without notice I can only move for an adjournment from day to day, it stand adjourned for ten days or a fortnight, which would allow time to consider the gravity of the circumstances. This is the statement which I have the honor of laying before the House. I move that when the House adjourns to-day it stand adjourned until Tuesday, the 21st inst.

Mr. Costigan seconded.

Mr Laurier—Mr. Speaker, I really believe that my hon. friend who now leads the House will not be surprised if I tell him at the outset that it will not be possible for me nor for any of those who sit on this side of the House to agree at this moment to the proposition that the House should adjourn at all except in the ordinary way from day to day. I understand very well that the Government are in a very peculiar position and they are entitled, I must say, to some commiseration—(ironical hear, hears)—and I am not disposed to refuse the commiseration to them in any way. But, on the other hand, we must have something like Parliamentary government in this country, and it is time we should put an end to the travesty, the mockery and the sham which has been too long going on here under the name of Parliamentary government. It is not at all surprising to me that there should be resignations of members of the Cabinet. I must say that I have rather expected it ever since we had the resignations on the 8th of July last. I rather expected then that the day would come when another wing of the Cabinet would do the same thing as had been done by the wing of the Cabinet which resigned on that occasion. On that point I have nothing to say further than this : Sir Adolphe Caron has told us that seven of the members of the Administration have resigned. Sir, the hon. gentleman should have told us what is the cause which has brought on these resignations. Not a word, not a syllable, not a scintilla of information has been given to the House upon this most important subject. We knew before Sir Adolphe spoke, because the fact had gone abroad through the length and breadth of the land, that seven of his colleagues had resigned, but we were in the dark then and we are in the dark yet as to what are the causes which led to this most extraordinary and important event. What are the causes? I must assume that some extraordinary event has taken place, which has induced seven of the members of the Administration to take such a course. I cannot assume for a moment that the hon. gentlemen who have resigned have tendered their resignations to the Premier for causes which existed when this Parliament met on the 2nd of this month. To assume that would be to suppose that these hon. gentlemen had acted not only in a most unparliamentary manner, but that they had acted in a most treacherous manner to the Premier, and in a most unpardonable manner towards the dignity of the Crown. (Opposition cheers.) Why, sir, what is the position we are in this moment? The position is this. On the 8th July last, when the Cabinet had been tossed to and fro, and the members were undecided as to whether or not they would introduce a measure of remedial legislation with regard to the Manitoba school case, based upon the order in Council of the 21st March last, they came here with the announcement that they were to reopen negotiations with the Government of Manitoba, and that in the event of Manitoba failing to give to the minority the redress which the minority was asking for, then they would summon Parliament not later than the 2nd of January, and introduce remedial legislation and press it to a conclusion. Parliament was summoned to assemble on the 2nd of January, and Parliament met on the 2nd of January. The whole Cabinet has put in the mouth of his Excellency a statement of the policy which the Government intended to carry on this session and of the measures which they proposed to introduce. This was assented to unanimously. All the colleagues of the Prime Minister, of course, pledged themselves to the support of that policy. Now, are we to suppose that, after the whole of the Government have been committed to that policy, after they have taken their course, and after they have placed in the hands of the Crown the policy which the advisers of the Crown intended to carry on—are we to suppose that, unless something unforeseen has taken place since, then, these gentlemen would have resigned on account of causes which existed at the very time they put that language in the mouth of the representative of the Crown? We are indeed told by the Ministerial press that no extraordinary event has taken place since that time, but that these gentlemen have tendered their resignations on account of reasons which existed long before Parliament was called. Again, I assume that some very extraordinary event must have taken place since the opening of Parliament.

It is true the Ministerial press has given us an even extraordinary in its character, which, however, did not affect the whole Cabinet, but affected two members of the Administration. It is true it has been stated in the press that a member of the Administration had charged one of his colleagues, with having anonymously slandered him to his Excellency the Governor-General, and had carried on investigation behind his back, although they were sitting all the time at the same table in Council, and that under such circumstances there was something to be investigated between those two gentlemen. Well, this is an extraordinary event, I must admit, but it is not an event, I would imagine, which would bring on such a crisis as we have at present.

What is the true cause, I ask ? We are told in the organs of the Government that the Conservative party are dissatisfied with the leadership of Sir Mackenzie Bowell. As to that I have nothing to say. It is a purely family quarrel in which I would not at all venture to take any part. It is for the Conservatives themselves to settle that question. But, sir, if that were the cause, if that is the real reason, and the only reason, why we have the present crisis, then, met as we are here today to discuss the speech of his Excellency, when we are asked to adjourn the House we had better know whether that is the cause or not. But, sir, this cause existed long ago. Whether the Conservative party at large is or is not satisfied with the leadership of Sir Mackenzie Bowell, it is for gentlemen on the other side of the House and not for me to determine. I have to say that Parliament would be trifled with if that were given as the cause why we should not proceed with the business of the House. Parliament has been called to determine a certain policy, but to me it looks very much as if this were another of those expedients, of which we have had too many already, in order to enable the Government to not carry out the pledges which they gave to Parliament. (Liberal cheers.)

Mr. Speaker—Is the motion of Sir Adolphe Caron objected to ?

Mr. Laurier—Certainly. Notice must be given.

Sir Adolphe Caron—Then I will give it as a notice of motion for to-morrow.

Mr. Laurier—For the day after to-morrow.

Sir Adolphe Caron—I move that the House do now adjourn.

The remarks of Mr. Foster will be found on page two.

Sir Richard Cartwright—I do not know which is the more extraordinary, the request made by the present leader of the House or the statement to which we have just listened from the ex-leader of the House. I have had some Parliamentary experience. It is three and thirty years since I first sat in the Parliament of the then two Canadas, and in all that time, although I have seen many crises and assisted at some, I can recall nothing in the faintest degree parallel with the present condition of things. Sir, I defy my hon. friend the ex-Minister of Justice, who is learned in precedents, to point out to us, in the history of any English-speaking community, a case in which seven Ministers of the Crown have resigned in the interval between the placing of a speech in the mouth of the Governor or Sovereign of the country and the debate that usually follows thereon. (Opposition cheers.) We have heard of sudden conversions and sudden convictions. We know, on the authority of an eminent English writer, that

"Mercy has been sought and found
Between the saddle and the ground."

But that is not a circumstance to the speed with which these new convictions have dawned on the minds of my hon. friends opposite. Now it does appear to me that these hon. gentlemen, one and all, have offered a direct insult to the representative of the Sovereign and a direct insult to the House. (Hear, hear, from the Opposition.) It appears to me, no matter what their grounds or their reasons may be, that for a Cabinet to place a speech in the mouth of his Excellency, and then, before the ink on the document is dry, to put a pistol to the head of their own colleague, the Premier of the country—to place him in the utterly humiliating and degrading position in which they have tried to place him, whether successfully or not—it is, I am happy to say, utterly unparalleled in the history of any British community. Neither is it a less insult to the House. Here we are, for the first time in Canadian history, summoned to hold a sixth session of Parliament for a most precise and special purpose, and the men who unanimously declared, speaking through the mouth of the hon. gentleman who has just addressed us, that it was necessary to the best interests of Canada that this extraordinary step should be taken, that this Parliament should be summoned on the 2nd day of January, 1896, to consult on a measure to which they declared themselves pledged, which they informed us it was their duty, their imperative duty, to bring down, now present themselves before us as the very men who have—what shall I say ?—combined together or conspired together to render its discussion impossible. (Liberal cheers.) More than that, I say it is a fraud on the country. Each and every one of these seven gentlemen, if they entertained—as is specially evident from the statement we have just heard—if they long entertained sentiments against the leader of the Government such as have been expressed, they have openly and shamefully perpetuated a fraud upon the electorate of the country. During the recent bye-elections, during the election of my hon. friend who has just taken his seat from Montreal Centre—during the Conservative conventions—during the election in Jacques Cartier, during the election in North Ontario, during the election in Cardwell—I might almost say during the recent election in Victoria—have these men, one and all, led us to believe that the Cabinet was three months perfect unity, that they were one of brothers without any dissensions or disputes ? Have they not, in tones of thunder, especially through the late Secretary of State—what is he now ?—the ex-Minister of Agriculture, declared that the stories to the contrary were the vilest slanders of an unscrupulous Grit press ? (Liberal cheers.) Have they not over and over again declared that all these accusations which have been made against men so notoriously at one as the late Minister of Railways and his colleague the Minister of Public Works were pure inventions of the enemy, and not entitled to the slightest consideration ? Now it is no light thing at a crisis like this, it is no light thing when several constituencies are being called upon to record their verdict, that Ministers of the Crown should come before them with statements in their mouths which I cannot characterize in Parliamentary language other than this, that they appear to have not the slightest foundation in fact. Judging from the statement which my hon. friend the ex-Minister of Finance, has just made.

Then again, over and above all this, the matter is complicated by another consideration. It appears to me that these gentlemen's own honor demands now a full statement of the reasons which impelled them to take that extraordinary course, and it is certain that two of these hon. gentlemen, in view of the most extraordinary statements which are being circulated broadcast from one end of this country to the other, ought before this day closes or this House rises to inform us what truth there is or what truth there is not in the statement that one hon. Minister, or ex-Minister, has been caught in the act of slandering anonymously the reputation of an able and honorable colleague. I offer no opinion on the subject other than this : that it is due to both gentlemen that if this statement be true the proofs be given, and that if it is false it be contradicted on the spot. I shall not say much about the modus operandi of these anonymous letters, but will merely offer the suggestion that if it should again become necessary in the discharge of a patriotic duty for any gentleman in a similar position to address anonymous correspondence to his Excellency, the communication should, for the sake of decency and for the sake of preventing future scandals, be typewritten, and the typewriter be broken up immediately, so that there may be no possibility of afterwards detecting it. (Liberal laughter.) What sort of opinions are we to suppose these hon. gentlemen entertain of each other if they have been sitting in Council devising schemes for the welfare of Canada from day to day and entertaining the opinion which apparently they must have entertained of each other, if we are to place the smallest reliance on the statements that have been circulated broadcast through the newspaper press ? I will say but this one thing in conclusion, before these hon. gentlemen rise, as I trust they will, to give some sort of explanation to the House of their extraordinary conduct, and it is this : for my part I am prepared to grant, and I hope and I believe my friends are prepared to grant, the fullest consideration to the present First Minister, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, who, whatever his faults and sins may be, appears, so far as we can see, to have acted strightforwardly under very difficult circumstances indeed.

The motion was agreed to and at 3.50 the House adjourned.

IN THE SENATE

Sir Mackenzie, after reading the same statement that was read in the House of Commons, said :—I have to ask that when the House adjourns to-night it stands adjourned until to-morrow at 8 o'clock. It is not usual, I believe, upon occasions of this kind to make explanations at any length until the action of the Government, whatever it may be, has been taken in reference to the filling of the vacancies or the organization and formation of a new Government. I shall act on this occasion in accordance with English precedents. I have simply to say, in addition to the remarks I have already made, that I believe an explanation has been made in another place by one of the gentlemen who retired from the Cabinet, giving his reasons therefor. I have not yet had an opportunity of reading it, but only casually heard it, and am, therefore, not in a position to deal with it as I think its importance demands. I must, therefore, ask the indulgence of the House for at least 24 hours, when I shall be in a much better position to deal with the statement as it deserves. In making this request I have no desire to shirk any of the responsibilities which devolve upon the head of the Government in dealing with matters referred to in the speech from the throne. As I have stated, I have not seen the statement to which I refer, nor was that courtesy extended to me as the head of the Government of handing me a copy of it in order that it might be dealt with properly, and I therefore ask again the indulgence of the House to permit me to postpone the matter until it appears in the press to-morrow, when I can deal with it as its merits deserve. If my ears did not deceive me in what I heard of it I can only say that it was uncalled for, that it was unfair to the head of the Government for the time being. To say that much is, I think, saying very little. I leave that to the gentleman who thought proper to make the statement, and if it fails to satisfy him and his friends I can only appeal to the judgment of the country in defence of the course which I have taken. I shall add this, however : The declaration that I made in this House just before its prorogation last year in reference to the future policy of the Government upon the great question which is agitating the people of this country will, so far as I am concerned and so far as my influence goes, be carried out to the letter. (Applause.) I have yet to learn that it is my duty as a public man to do otherwise. Having enunciated a principle, firmly believing as I did, and as I suppose my colleagues did, that it was a sound principle, that it was but doing justice to a portion of this Dominion and maintaining the provisions of the constitution and giving to a portion of her Majesty's subjects who had been deprived of their rights that which the constitution and the highest court of the realm stated that they were entitled to, I feel it my duty, as far as in my power lies, to see that the remedy is given. It is to me a subject of deep regret that any difference of opinion should prevail among gentlemen who had formed a deliberate opinion to take a course which, I regret to say, led one of my colleagues, in whom I had the most unbounded confidence and respect, to leave the Government last year because we did not act at that time and because we asked for delay in order to give the Province, whose action it is asserted will be interfered with, time at least to consider the grave question with which they and with which we have had to deal. We were accused of no other desire but to so put off and delay the question that it might be ultimately defeated by some—to use the very familiar but not very elegant expression—some dodge. Whether that was the intention of those who have taken a different course from the gentlemen who have remained in the Cabinet, I am not prepared to say. I shall content myself at the present moment with the few remarks that I have made, and when the proper time arrives, when it will be necessary to deal with the explanation which has been made in another place, I trust I shall be enabled to make such an explanation in reference to myself as is needed by the part I took in which I have been and have been left subject to most grave misrepresentation, and to the policy of the Government of which I have been for a little time a member, which will, I have no doubt, have its defenders in this House and in the other House, and which I have been prepared to defend, having been a party to it, to the extent