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1901-05-10

House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker

took the chair at 10.50 a.m.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

The Usher of the Black Rod being announced, was admitted, and delivered the message that "His Excellency the Governor-General desires the immediate attendance of this honorable House in the Senate chamber."

The House went) and honorable members being returned,

Mr. SPEAKER

said I have the honour to announce that, honorable members having attended by the summons of His Excellency the Governor-General, in the Senate chamber, His Excellency was pleased to make a speech setting out the reasons why this Parliament has been summoned. As copies of His Excellency's speech will be handed to honorable member's presently, I will assume that it is their desire that it be taken as read.

Honorable Members. - Hear, hear.

ACTS INTERPRETATION BILL

Attorney-General

Mr DEAKIN

. - In order to assert the right of this House to legislate at this stage, I beg to move -

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the interpretation of Acts of Parliament, and the shortening of their language.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill presented (by Mr. Deakin) and read the first time.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - It is customary before 'proceeding with other business to appoint a select committee to prepare an Address in Reply to the speech delivered by His Excellency. That I trust will be taken as a formality on this occasion, and the consideration of the Address I then propose to make on order of the day for the 21st of this month.

Mr Fisher

- What is the reason for the delay in regard to the circulation of the speech? We have not received copies yet.

Mr BARTON

- Copies will be handed round as soon as possible. The speech cannot be considered to-day. There will be ten days in which to consider it

Mr Fisher

- We can please ourselves about that.

<page>32</page>

Mr BARTON

- If this House adjourns, the honorable member cannot please himself, I take it. I beg to move -

That a select committee, consisting of Mr. W. H. Groom, Mr. T. Ewing, Sir J. Langdon Bonython, and Mr. R. A. Crouch, be appointed to prepare an Address in Reply to the speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor-General on opening the first session of the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. The committee retired, and having reentered the chamber, presented the proposed address, which was read by the Clerk, as follows : -

May it please Your Excellency :

We, the House of Representatives, in the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the gracious speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

Motion (by Mr. Barton) agreed to-

That the consideration of the Address in Reply to the Governor-General's speech as read by the clerk stand an order of the day for Tuesday, 21st May.

STANDING ORDERS

Mr. BARTON

(Hunter- Minister for

External Affairs). - I lay on the table a draft of standing orders and rules for the House of Representatives, and move -

That the document be printed.

Copies will be distributed to honorable members to-morrow, as soon as the printing can be finished.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Motion (by Mr. Barton) proposed -

That the House at its rising adjourn until the 21st May, at half-past two o'clock.

Mr Watson

- Does that mean actually half-past two ?

Mr Barton

- Actually half-past two.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I should like to suggest to the Government that perhaps four o'clock would be a more convenient hour. I am not suggesting this time as a precedent, but simply for that particular day. Honorable members will understand that business will take them to the other States in the intervening time, and many of them will not come back to Melbourne until the morning of Tuesday, 21st May, when most of them will arrive at about half-past twelve. Perhaps the right honorable gentleman as a matter of courtesy will alter his motion, as it may be necessary for honorable members to meet in the afternoon before the meeting of Parliament. It would be a convenience, at any rate, to some honorable members if the motion were amended.

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - I have no objection to moving that the House meet at half-past three, if there is no objection on the part of honorable members. Or, if more convenient, we might say four o'clock - that is, for that day only, of course. I intend to ask honorable members to make half-past two o'clock the ordinary hour of sitting, except on Fridays, on which day I shall ask them to sit at two o'clock.

Motion, by leave, amended accordingly.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Resolved

- That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 21st May instant, at four o'clock.

Mr SPEAKER

- May I take this opportunity of saying that I propose to take the chair each day on the stroke of the clock at the time appointed.

QUESTION

PACIFIC CABLE

Mr COOK

- I should like to ask the Minister representing the Postmaster-General whether he will as early as may be place on the table of the House for the information of honorable members all the papers he may have relating to the present position of the Pacific Cable question 1

Mr BARTON

- I shall recommend my colleague to adopt the course suggested by the honorable member for Parramatta.

ADJOURNMENT

Hansard Election Petition

Motion (by Mr. Barton) proposed -

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr FISHER

- I should like to ask the Premier, or whoever is in charge of the matter, what arrangements have been made in regard to the official publication of Hansard, and what will be the method of distribution to honorable members.

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - In answer to the honorable member, I have to say that a staff has been appointed of skilled shorthand writers, who, I have no doubt, will do their work with the utmost efficiency; and it is proposed, for the present at any rate, to issue the Hansard reports to honorable members weekly.

Mr KING O'MALLEY

- I would like to ask the Prime Minister if there is to be any arrangement made -

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I rise to order, Mr. Speaker. Are we to have any further questions or statements after the Premier has replied to the debate on the motion for adjournment ? It is just as well we should know at this stage.

Mr Barton

- I replied to the question only as a matter of courtesy. I did not intend to close the debate.

<page>33</page>

Mr SPEAKER

- I take it the Prime Minister rose because he thought no other honorable member wished to speak. It was certainly with that idea I called on him ; but if any honorable member has further questions to put, I am certain the Prime Minister will temporarily withdraw his motion.

Mr BARTON

- If it be necessary to put myself in order, I withdraw my motion for the present.

Mr.WATSON (Bland). - Following up the question of the member for Wide Bay, I would like to ask the Premier whether the Cabinet has yet considered the propriety of issuing copies of Hansard at only a nominal charge to the public. There seems greater reason for something being done in this direction in connexion with the Commonwealth Parliament. From the fact that we are so far from our constituencies, it is necessary that a very low charge, if any, should be made for copies of Hansard.

Mr BARTON

- It has been found in the case of the States that there is not much demand for the literature of Hansard on the part of the public, but I will see that honorable members are supplied gratis with a reasonable number of copies. I hope the charge made for the interesting publication will not be excessive.

Mr Speaker

- I have to announce to the House that I have had placed in my hands a petition against the return of an honorable member. I have not had time yet to read it, but I shall do so, and report to the House at its next sitting.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

House adjourned at 11.40 a. m.

<page>34</page>

11:40:00

House adjourned at 11.40 a. m.