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SCANDAL CHARGES TAKEN UP IN DOMINION HOUSE

Bourassa in a Characteristic Speech Moves for Committee of Inquiry to Investigate Private Affairs of Members---Laurier Intimates That Bourassa is a Muck Raker Dealing in Gutter Gossip.

OTTAWA, March 26.—In the house this afternoon Henri Bourassa, M. P. for La Belle, moved for a committee of enquiry to consider various transactions of members of the house referred to in the report of the royal insurance commission. His resolution was as follows:—

That the report of the royal commission on life insurance and the evidence connected therewith have made public various transactions in which members of this house participated, namely—the honorable member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), the honorable member for Kings (N. B.), (Mr. Fowler); the honorable member for East Simcoe (Mr. Bennett), the honorable member for Prince (P. E. I.), (Mr. Lefebvre).

That such transactions have been commented upon by several organs of public opinion in terms reflecting upon the honor, the integrity and the independence of the above named gentlemen; that reference to such transactions have been made in this house during the present session, namely, by the honorable member for Carleton (N. B.), (Mr. Carvell), on Feb. 7 and 21, and by the honorable member for Yale-Cariboo (Mr. Ross), on Feb. 19, in terms indicating that, in the opinion of these two honorable gentlemen, the above named honorable members are guilty of improper conduct.

That on Nov. 26 last, the honorable member for Wright (Mr. Devlin) referred to the honorable member for North Toronto as being unworthy of a seat in this house, on account of the transactions above mentioned.

That on Feb. 19 last, the honorable member for Kings (N. B.), (Mr. Fowler), addressing the honorable member for Yale-Cariboo (Mr. Ross), stated: "We will show your connections with Mr. Hill—and we will give you the true insight of the Hyman story, too," and added: "I shall discuss the character of honorable members opposite, whether they be ministers or private members, and their connection with women, wine and graft."

That these statements have become a matter of general comment and have aroused public opinion throughout the country so that an immediate inquiry is imperative.

That the prime minister and his colleagues, being the principal guardians of the honor of parliament, should take the initiative in such an inquiry.

That the government should, therefore, ask the house to constitute a special committee to conduct a strict and impartial inquiry as to whether any members of the crown or members of parliament have improperly made use of their positions as such for their private gain or have otherwise been guilty of personal misconduct under such circumstances or of such a character as to justify the intervention and censure of the house.

That any charges that may be preferred against any member of the government or of the house should be formulated before that committee, and that members of this house, or other persons, who have material or data at their disposal with reference thereto, should divulge them to that committee.

That such committee have power to employ and hear counsel to send for persons, papers and records, to examine witnesses on oath or affirmation, and to report to the house during the present session.

Mr. Bourassa supported his resolution in a remarkably bitter speech. At the outset he said he was not going to engage in the work of the muck raker and any who expected that would be disappointed. Continuing, he said:—

"I have not come here for the pleasure of dragging before the public the good name of my colleagues with whom I may have had some political differences but no personal enmity. I may perhaps claim that I have some advantage in presenting this matter inasmuch as the future and the fate of either political party, as at present constituted, is a matter of indifference to me. I therefore bring this question forward, not with the view of helping the government to ruin some of their political opponents, nor with the view of helping the opposition to bring to task some members of the government. I bring it forward because I consider it is my public duty to give voice in parliament to the clamor of public opinion as it is expressed at the present time throughout all Canada.

He said the matter was brought to a crisis by Mr. Fowler who threatened if attacked for private matters to carry the war into Africa. The public now holds the impression that both parties fear the

revelations to be made and that neither party wished to charge the other.

Mr. Bourassa endeavored to show that there had been a bargain between the prime minister and Mr. Fowler to shut out discussion on this matter. His justification for this claim was that the prime minister stated to the house that if there were anything in the report of the insurance commission against Mr. Fowler it would be proper to proceed against him when the time came before the house.

"I would like to know," said Mr. Bourassa, "where the connection is between the report of the royal commission to investigate insurance and the relations of women and graft?" I do not know that the insurance commission was instructed to investigate the private and public conduct of ministers of the crown. Even without the insurance commission it would be the duty of Mr. Fowler to make good his threat. Except for the semblance of a saw-off, the premier admitted the session should not close without the matter being discussed. The leader of the opposition had agreed with Sir Wilfrid. Mr. Fowler had admitted it was necessary to have an investigation."

Continuing he urged the appointment of a committee to find out who are the honest men and who are the dishonest men in this house. He then quoted from the insurance report and read what was said against Senator Cox in connection with the Canada life and against Hon. George E. Foster, Dr. Montague and others in connection with the Independent Order of Foresters. In connection with Mr. Foster Mr. Bourassa said that he had viewed the report of the Union Trust Co. Mr. Foster interrupted to say that this was a misstatement.

Mr. Bourassa then dealt with the transactions of the Pope-Fowler-Foster-Bennett-Lefebvre land deal, and added that Mr. Foster was impugned, that certain matters were not made public until an investigation was made of the books of the Great West Land Company which inspection was resisted for a time.

Mr. Bourassa then said that, in looking over the record of what had become of the Foresters' money, they found that the member for Kings (Mr. Fowler), as well as Messrs. Bennett and Lefebvre received some of it.

In conclusion he said he would not take the risk of making these charges himself because he would not give the government or the opposition the chance of making him the scape goat in this matter.

Referring to Mr. Fowler's insinuations, Mr. Bourassa said that not only did the member for Kings make accusations but stated that he had material, that he had been gathering data and that is why his charge is entirely different from any other charge or insinuations that have ever been made in this house by a public man. Rumors are going all over the city of Ottawa and insinuations are made right and left in the corridors by members of parliament and outsiders. It was the duty of the government to intervene. In regard to the morality of the ministers of the crown his guiding principle was that applied in Great Britain. He cited the case of Sir Charles Dilke.

Respect to the Hyman story, the member of Kings should be called upon to prove it. In regard to the general accusations about "wine, women and graft," if any minister of the crown is connected in any such way that it has become a matter of public scandal any one who has the facts must make them public.

Mr. Bourassa moved his resolution. Sir Wilfrid Laurier said "the motion which had been placed in the speaker's hands by Mr. Bourassa is the most extraordinary one which, in the course of a long parliamentary life I have ever seen. It is certainly unique in its character. The honorable gentleman has chosen to bring this motion in shape of an amendment to go into committee of supply."

"It was open to him to submit his motion as a substantive one which could have been debated upon its merits and in all its aspects. He is aware that, by the method which he has adopted, discussion is circumvented and there is no free scope to amend or present the different aspects. According to rules of the house the motion has to be taken in its entirety, voted up or voted down and it is not susceptible of any amendment. If there be in that motion truth and falsehood, or falsehood has to be accepted with truth. If there is in it that which is proper or improper, the same rule will apply. Therefore, it is to say the least an extraordinary proceeding on the part of the honorable gentleman, at the outset professing to be so anxious to have a fair inquiry into this matter, to limit the scope of discussion as he has done."

"The honorable gentleman has told us something about his motive. His desire is to clear the atmosphere in which we live, to ascertain where are honest men and where are dishonest men. I can only say to Mr. Bourassa that every member in this house is an honest man (cheers)."

That every man in this house has a right to walk with his head erect, and every man in this house has a right to his character until that character has been taken from him, not by insinuation, not by tit-bit-tattle of the street, but upon a charge made by some one who has the courage to make such a charge. (Renewed cheers).

"It will not do to say that there are rumors. Of course there are, and there may be rumors, but since when is a British parliament and under British institutions have rumors been a matter of investigation?"

"If there are rumors against me or against my colleagues, it is open to any man to take up these rumors and to bring them forward in the shape of a charge, which I can meet, to which I can oppose my denial or in regard to which I can offer my explanation; but it is absolutely unprecedented in any British parliament that the house of commons has ever investigated or has ordered one of its committees to investigate rumors. The house of commons has never either in this country or the mother country, ordered an investigation except upon a charge, which the minister against whom it is levelled can face and to which he can give an answer. That is the position, however, which my honorable friend has taken."

"Let me call his attention, because I believe he has written this in a hurry, to the conclusion of his motion." The premier quoted this, and continued: "Against whom is this levelled? It is levelled against the 214 men of the house of com-

mons. It is open to anybody to bring before this committee and to make a charge against any member of the house, against the honorable member for Labelle himself. He, strong in his fortitude and in his rectitude, may say that he would not object, but I do object that the privileges of the members should not be invaded unless there is cause for the invasion. I do object that the rules and regulations as provided and carried on should be discarded."

I protest against the idea that the house of commons should be turned into an inquisition. The house is the guardian of its own honor and it is its duty to see that every member shall have fair play and justice. My honorable friend has stated that there is a saw-off between the two sides of this house. Although I refer to this again I would have supposed that there would not have been any necessity to do so in the face of the denial twice repeated by the leader of the opposition that there has been no saw-off. I would have expected that after those denials the member for Labelle would not have undertaken today as he has done before to assert that there has been a saw-off."

Passing to another part of the motion relating to Mr. Fowler's statements, Sir Wilfrid said the member for Labelle had informed him that when Mr. Labelle was on a former occasion that the member for Kings had made no charges against any one.

"Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to perform at this moment a rather painful duty, but it is a duty which I must discharge in justice to myself and in justice to my colleague, the minister of public works, and when I have made the explanation the honorable gentleman (Mr. Bourassa) will understand why I would not be anxious to go into a saw-off with the member for Kings (Mr. Fowler)."

"There have been a great many rumors against my colleague, Mr. Hyman; there's no use in denying it. There have been rumors in this house that he was shamming disease and that he was not really sick. I believe that idea has been dispelled and that it is no longer entertained by anybody. I believe that everybody who knows that when Mr. Hyman left the house he was in very bad health and was a very sick man indeed. But that was not the only rumor. The atmosphere was thick with rumors and last fall, about September or October, a certain rumor came to me and I spoke to a mutual friend who is now in the house and he told me that I must make myself a detective and words, and I said to him: 'I have been a friend of Hyman for many years; you are still more a friend than I. I have heard this and you have heard it also; go to him and tell him he must let me know what truth there is in this.' That rumor was in connection with Mr. Hyman and my honorable friend went to Mr. Hyman and Mr. Hyman sent me word that there was not a word of truth in the rumor. I have to take the house and country into my confidence; I wish it were otherwise. This statement made by the minister of public works at that time has since been corroborated by a telegram which was read in the committee some few weeks ago, and which was sent by Mr. Hyman to his friend, Mr. Duffell. It said: 'Any statement or insinuation that my resignation either as member or minister was prompted by other motives than his resignation, and therefore, I am not a person. My honorable friend went to Mr. Hyman and Mr. Hyman sent me word that there was not a word of truth in the rumor. I have to take the house and country into my confidence; I wish it were otherwise. 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