

6-7 GEORGE V

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 72a

A. 1916

ROYAL COMMISSION

RE

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS FIRE

AT.

OTTAWA, FEBRUARY 3, 1916

REPORT OF COMMISSIONERS AND EVIDENCE

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REPORT

*To Field Marshal His Royal Highness Prince Arthur William Patrick Albert,
Duke of Connaught and of Strathearn, K.G., K.T., K.P., etc., etc., Governor
General and Commander in Chief of the Dominion of Canada.*

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS:

Your Royal Highness was pleased by Royal Commission, dated 7th February, A.D. 1916, to appoint us commissioners to conduct an inquiry into and concerning the origin of the fire which destroyed the Parliament Buildings, at Ottawa, and to make full investigation into all matters connected therewith, and we were given all powers under the provisions of Part One of the Inquiries Act, being chapter 104 of the Revised Statutes of Canada, and the Amending Act, being chapter 28 of 2 George V (1912).

Immediately upon receiving our appointment we took steps to ascertain the names, in as far as possible, of any and all persons from whom we would be likely to obtain any evidence pertinent to the inquiry, and caused subpoenas to be issued and served for their attendance at the different sittings of the commission.

Our first meeting was held at the City Hall, city of Ottawa, on Thursday, the 10th day of February last, and a number of witnesses were examined, and at this meeting we publicly invited any person or persons who had any knowledge in regard to the origin of the fire, and which they considered the commission should be apprised of, to either attend before the commission, when their evidence would be heard, or to communicate with the commission.

We subsequently held a number of public meetings in the city of Ottawa, at which many witnesses were examined, and we received numerous communications from persons actuated by a desire to assist us in our investigation, all of which were considered carefully.

Your commissioners deemed it advisable to have the assistance of counsel, and retained W. R. White, Esq., K.C., of Pembroke, who acted throughout the investigation in the examination of witnesses, and generally in assisting your commission in their inquiry.

Your commissioners find that the fire which destroyed the Parliament Buildings in the city of Ottawa, on the night of 3rd February, 1916, started at about 8.55 p.m. (alarm registered at city fire station at 8.57 p.m.).

The fire had its origin in the room shown on the plan accompanying this report, as reading-room. This room was used as a newspaper room, and contained six double reading tables or desks with shelving on which newspaper files were placed. There were also screens or partitions, as shown on plan, on each side of the room on which newspaper files were hung. Around this room there was also a gallery with a large number of shelves on which there were piled papers, books, etc. All fittings, except two of above-mentioned reading tables (these two were of hardwood), were of white pine, oiled and varnished, and were highly inflammable.

The fire started in a file of papers on a shelf on one of the reading tables near the House of Commons side. The first person to see the fire was Francis Glass, Esq., M.P., who stated that the fire originated while he was in the reading-room; that he

had been in the reading-room a short time when he felt a wave of heat passing up alongside of him as from a hot-air register, and he turned around and almost immediately smelled the burning of paper; stooped down and saw the smoke coming out. He immediately called the caretaker, who did not answer, and then he called to the officer, who looked at it and rushed out evidently for a fire extinguisher. The officer got an extinguisher off the wall of the reading-room, and started to operate it, but in an instant the fire gained headway, and developed into a large flame. The constable who got the fire extinguisher was Constable Moore.

This fire extinguisher was got from the east side of the reading-room, and according to the evidence of Constable Moore, was in good working order, but the fire had got such headway that he was unable to put it out with the extinguisher, and was driven back by the force of the fire. Just at the moment he was using the fire extinguisher, he called to some one to turn on the water, which was done immediately, and the water was directed on the fire from the Senate side, but neither the fire extinguisher or the stream of water which was directed on the fire had the effect of staying its progress, and it spread rapidly to the corridors of the House of Commons.

According to the evidence of Chief Graham, Chief of the Fire Department of the city of Ottawa, an alarm was sounded from the automatic system at 8.57, and within two minutes from the receipt of the alarm, No. 8 motor engine was on the Hill. The fire had by that time broken through the roof (the second alarm was sent in at 9.05), and in a very short time twenty streams of water were playing upon the fire. All the hydrants were in perfect order, with the exception of one, which was slightly frozen, but was thawed out very quickly. The water pressure, according to Chief Graham, was first class. Notwithstanding the efforts of the fire brigade, the fire extended practically throughout the whole building, and the fire was not got under control until two o'clock of the morning of 4th February.

The hook-and-ladder companies did splendid work in rescuing people from the building, but unfortunately, although every effort was made by the fire brigade, they were unable to rescue Mrs. Bray and Mrs. Morin. They were not got from the building until twenty-five or thirty minutes after the fire started, and both ladies expired through suffocation and shock. A number of men were rescued from the western side of the building by means of ladders. One tower that fell evidently killed Dominion Police Constable Desjardins, Alphonse Desjardins, an employee of the Public Works Department, and Walter Fanning, an employee of the Post Office Department. These men were directing a stream from one of the stand-pipes in the building, and were buried under tons of debris when the tower fell. J. B. Laplante, Assistant Law Clerk of the House of Commons, was evidently overcome in one of the rooms, and his remains were found in a badly burned condition the following day. Mr. B. B. Law, member of Parliament, was also caught in the building, but his remains have not been recovered.

The fire spread with tremendous rapidity. Once breaking from the reading-room the heat and flame spread around the corridors of the House of Commons chamber and into the roof of the Commons and Senate chambers, which were of white pine, and the construction of which was, as expressed by the Chief of Police, a veritable forest of timber. There were no fire checks or iron doors in the building with the exception of one to the Library which evidently had the effect of saving the Library.

WERE PROPER PRECAUTIONS TAKEN TO GUARD AGAINST FIRE?

Some suggestions have been made that there should have been fire checks or fire doors between the reading-room and the corridors, which would have had the effect of confining the fire to the reading-room until such time as it could be conquered. It has also been suggested that if there had been a sprinkling system installed in the

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reading-room that it might have suppressed the fire. Mr. Ewart, Consulting Architect, formerly Chief Architect for the Department of Public Works, in his evidence states that the advisability of putting in a modern up-to-date sprinkling system had never been considered, and he was doubtful as to its being feasible, although he was of opinion that it might have been put in the reading-room. As to the metal doors, his opinion was that the Library was saved by the metal door, but he did not consider that metal doors between the reading-room and the corridors would have prevented the fire, as the fire would have got over the top of the doors, owing to the construction of the building. The building was not in any sense a fire-proof building. Mr. Ewart has been connected with the building since 1871, and stated that in the days when these buildings were erected fire-proof buildings were not considered.

We have also learned from competent architects that it is not usual to put in a sprinkling system in a building such as the House of Commons. We are of opinion that all proper precautions were taken to guard against the spread of fire. The House of Commons building within the last two or three years was equipped with the May-Oatway automatic fire alarm system, which is connected directly with the city fire alarm system, and evidently was in perfect order on the night of the fire. According to the evidence, there were in the House of Commons building: 74 extinguishers, 62 being chemical; and 12 fire reels, 3,150 feet of hose in 100-foot lengths, and a reel containing one length of 400 feet for emergency. There were ample hydrants quite sufficient to cover the fire area. There were also fire axes and other fire-fighting appliances. The staffs were instructed in the use of the fire extinguisher from time to time. The evidence shows, and we find that the fire extinguishers were in good order at the time of the fire.

WAS THE FIRE OF INCENDIARY ORIGIN?

The statement of John R. Rathom, Editor and General Manager of the *Providence Journal*—a journal published in Providence, R.I., United States—that three weeks before the fire he had received information from employees of the German Embassy that within three weeks from that time the Ottawa Parliament Buildings would be destroyed by fire, coming at a time when there was a strong tendency on the part of the Canadian public to believe that the fire was maliciously set by the enemy, your commissioners felt that this theory, repugnant though it be to every instinct of humane men, could not be brushed aside as unbelievable, especially in view of the fact that John R. Rathom, almost at the same time, had given information in regard to the plot for the destruction of the Welland canal, and we consequently bent our energies in an effort to see whether a German mind had inspired this fire or not. We endeavoured for some time to get a statement from or to have John R. Rathom come to Ottawa for examination. We did not succeed in getting Mr. Rathom to come to Ottawa, but we received on the 13th of this month a statement from him, in which he says that three weeks before the fire he notified United States District Attorney H. Snowden Marshall, of the New York District, that in three weeks from that time the Ottawa Parliament Buildings would be destroyed by fire, and that Mr. Marshall has publicly acknowledged that this notification was given to him; while Mr. Rathom says the information came directly from the German Embassy itself, he is not in a position at the present time to make public the name of his informant.

We have taken the evidence of Colonel A. P. Sherwood, and made inquiries to see whether this information which was apparently given to H. Snowden Marshall ever reached Ottawa. We find that it did not.

We considered it advisable to ascertain whether proper precautions had been taken to prevent the destruction of the Parliament Buildings by fire or otherwise, and we find from the evidence of Col. A. P. Sherwood that immediately after the outbreak of war he had a conference with the Prime Minister (see page 141 of evidence).

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and a meeting was arranged between the two Speakers (House of Commons and Senate) and Colonel Sherwood, and as a result of this interview the guards about the buildings were strengthened, and a number of plain-clothes men were added to the force. Then again, on February 3, 1915, at the time of the blowing up of the bridge at Vanceboro, a special circular was sent out by Colonel Sherwood to every police department in Canada asking that extra vigilance be used (see circular, page 143 of evidence). Again, on or about the 12th July, 1915, in view of the alarming reports received, the Governor in Council decided on certain precautions in regard to public buildings. These precautions are fully set out in circular on page 143 of evidence. See also memorandum sent to Clerk of House of Commons, and Clerk of the Senate, on April 10, 1915, as to guarding doors, etc. (see page 143 of evidence).

According to the evidence, there were on duty the night of the fire the usual number of uniformed men and one plain-clothes man. The custom in regard to the reading-room was to have two guards, one at the Commons entrance and one at the Senate entrance, but at 8.30 p.m. the guard at the Senate entrance was removed, and the guard at the Commons entrance continued.

Guards were stationed at all corridors and at the Speaker's door, and also upstairs at the visitors' gallery, and one at the entrance to the ladies' gallery.

A great deal of evidence has been taken and some of the witnesses have asserted with great positiveness that the fire was set, and as Chief Graham expressed it, "the fire was set and well set." The chief reasons for that opinion seem to have been the lightning-like rapidity with which the fire spread, and certain explosions which were heard by several witnesses.

After giving the matter most careful consideration, we are of the opinion that the ventilating system, consisting of a number of fans, and which was in full operation at the time the fire started, one exhaust being immediately under the centre of the reading-room, and the air coming in through the door and the opening in the glass and being drawn out through this exhaust had the effect of creating a very strong current which caused the rapid spread of the fire in the reading-room, and once the fire reached the corridors of the House of Commons (the ceilings of the corridors and the members' wardrobes lining the corridors being of white pine, and most inflammable) the operation of the fans in the House of Commons creating a draught through the corridors to the House of Commons would have the effect of spreading the fire with great rapidity.

There were a number of witnesses who testified to hearing explosions, and no doubt there were explosions from gases, electric lights, etc. John A. Pearson, Esq., one of the architects selected by the Government in connection with the restoration of the Parliament Buildings, in his evidence taken on the 5th May last, states that after a thorough examination of the ruins of the House of Commons he can find no evidence of explosions.

It having come to our knowledge that fires had been started not only in the United States but in Canada, by the use of certain chemicals, we had Edgar Stansfield, Esq., Chemist of the Fuel Testing Division of the Mines Branch, and Mr. Carter, make certain tests, and they found that chemicals could be used to start such a fire as that in the Parliament reading-room. They prepared liquids which when poured on a newspaper ignited spontaneously after periods varying from a few minutes to more than an hour. The liquids had a distinct odour, but this decreased rapidly after being poured on the paper, and a few minutes later would usually escape notice in a well-ventilated room. They found that there were other liquids obtainable which were free from odour.

We also had a practical test made of a fire started by chemicals and one started in the ordinary way by a match. This test was made in the presence of Francis Glass, Esq., M.P., whose evidence will be found on page 136. Mr. Glass, after seeing the two fires, the one started with a match and the other with the chemical preparation, stated

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that the fire in the reading-room started in a similar manner to the fire started by the chemicals. Then he was asked if he saw any difference in the appearance of the two fires, in the appearance of the flame. He answered, "Yes, the appearance of this one is more like it to me, I mean the one started with the chemicals."

It was clear to us that the fire started on the newspaper with the chemicals, once it started burned with great rapidity. The fire started with the match burned very much more slowly. The one started with the chemicals was much harder to extinguish than the one started with the match.

According to the evidence of several witnesses, one or two strangers were about the House on the evening the fire started. W. B. Northrup, Esq., K.C., M.P., was under the impression that he saw a stranger going down the corridor towards the reading-room shortly before the alarm was given. E. M. McDonald, Esq., K.C., M.P., in his evidence (page 149) states that about twenty-five minutes to nine as he was going through the main door of the Parliament Buildings to enter the lobby he was struck by the appearance and restless manner of a man who was standing on the ledge at the left door going into the lobby. The man was nervous and his eyes were shifty. He was impressed with the idea that the man was worried about something.

The Honourable Albert Seigny, in his evidence taken before the commission on 5th May last, tells of a man who purported to be a Frenchman and who spoke French, but who Mr. Seigny thought was a German, having on Monday preceding the fire, and he thinks on the day of the fire, come to his chamber desiring to have access to the buildings for the purpose of taking photographs. He refused this man's request. The day after the fire Mr. Seigny gave orders to the messenger, who was at the door when the man came in, to try and find him in Ottawa. The messenger reported that he was unable to find him.

Since Mr. Seigny's evidence your commissioners have made inquiries in regard to this man, and have obtained a report from the Dominion Police, who say that acting upon the report of Joseph Turcotte, the messenger at the Parliament Buildings, and being the messenger Mr. Seigny referred to, they located this man, who they ascertained was a photographer by trade and that he had been at the Parliament Buildings two years previous to the fire taking photographs, and they were satisfied from their investigation that this man had nothing to do with the fire. They have obtained his name, address, etc.

In regard to the other strangers referred to, the policemen on guard have no recollection of seeing them.

Your commissioners are of the opinion that there are many circumstances connected with this fire that lead to a strong suspicion of incendiarism, especially in view of the fact that the evidence is clear that no one was smoking in the reading-room for some time previous to the outbreak of fire, and also the fact that the fire could not have occurred from defective electric wiring. But while your commissioners are of such opinion, there is nothing in the evidence to justify your commissioners in finding that the fire was maliciously set.

Your commissioners feel very strongly that it might be possible at a later date to obtain evidence (which they cannot reach at the present time) which might establish beyond question whether this fire was incendiary or accidental, and with the approval of Your Royal Highness, your commissioners would humbly suggest that this report be treated not as a final report but as an interim report, and that the commission be left open, and in the event of your commissioners being able to get further evidence at a later date that they be permitted to do so.

Your commissioners desire to place on record their sympathy with those bereaved owing to loss of life. Your commissioners also desire to place on record their appreciation of the assistance given to them by Col. A. P. Sherwood, Chief Commissioner of Dominion Police, and his staff; Chief Graham, Chief of the City Fire Department,

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and his staff; Messrs. Stansfield and Carter, of the Mines Branch, and all witnesses and officials who came forward and voluntarily gave their testimony in this investigation.

Copy of evidence and exhibits accompany this report.

Respectfully submitted.

R. A. PRINGLE,

D. B. MacTAVISH,

Commissioners.

Dated at Ottawa, this 15th day of May, A.D. 1916.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

OTTAWA, Thursday, February 10, 1916.

The Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the origin of the fire which destroyed the central Parliamentary Building at Ottawa, on Thursday, February 3, 1916, met at the City Hall, Ottawa, this morning at 10.30 o'clock.

PRESENT:

ROBERT A. PRINGLE, Esquire, K.C.;
His Honour Judge DUNCAN BYRON MAC TAVISH, } *Commissioners.*
W. R. WHITE, Esquire, K.C., Counsel assisting the Commission.

Mr. PRINGLE, K.O. (Commissioner): Before calling witnesses and proceeding with regular business, I desire to say a word or two. His Honour Judge MacTavish and myself have been appointed by Royal Commission to conduct an inquiry into and concerning the origin of the recent disastrous fire which destroyed the Parliament Building at Ottawa, and to make a full investigation into all matters connected therewith, and we have been given full powers in regard to such investigation. I do not deem it necessary for us to say anything in regard to the great calamity which overtook us on the night of February 3—it is an event that will be memorable in making history. The material loss is great, but we all hope and we all know that in a few short months this building will be restored and will be probably more fitted to meet the conditions of the present day. What to us is the most appalling is the loss of life and our sympathy goes out to those who have been bereaved.

History is full of accounts of the devastation caused by fire in the different countries of the civilized world. We in Canada probably have been favoured; we have had no very great fires in this country. Most great fires have been found to be due, first, to the combustible nature of the contents of buildings and the materials of the buildings themselves, architectural defects in construction, and secondly, the lack of proper fire appliances. The Empire is at war and being at war there is naturally a tendency to suspect the enemy in connection with this fire. It will be our duty to inquire very fully and very carefully as to whether the enemy had anything to do with this fire or not. We know that fires have been discovered in the country to the south of us, that have been set in a very simple manner—we have knowledge of a fire a very short time ago occurring in the United States of America, where a specially prepared liquid was thrown casually over a mass of papers. That special liquid was so composed that after being on those papers, and possibly beyond the means of detection, that it created the fire. Whether anything of that sort occurred here or not, it will be the subject of this inquiry.

As I stated, we are at war. If we have been slumbering, and I do not for a moment say we have, then the fire which occurred on Thursday night should awaken us from our slumber and probably it is better that our slumbers should be disturbed than that a great disaster should overtake us, in the event of us being asleep.

However, I want more particularly to say, and the press to particularly note, that both His Honour Judge MacTavish and myself fully realize the responsibility resting on our shoulders in connection with this investigation. We will do all that is

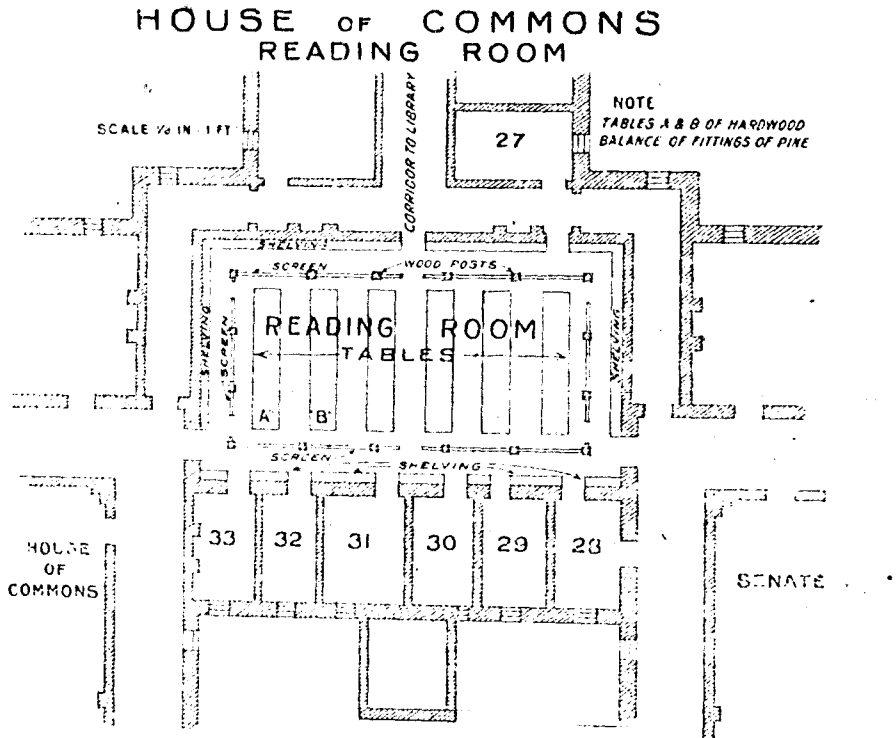
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humanly possible to do to get at the origin, but if any man, woman or child in this country has any knowledge that they think this Commission should have, then it is their duty as citizens of Canada to get into communication, either with the Commissioners, or the counsel, Mr. W. R. White, K.C., who is assisting us in this investigation. That is all I have to say in regard to this matter. Both of us appreciate to the full the responsibility that rests upon us, and we will do our utmost to carry out the work which is entrusted to us.

E. L. Howwood, Chief Architect of the Public Works Department, sworn:

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. You are producing a plan of the House of Commons building?—A. Yes. In submitting these plans, I may say that there have been alterations made from time to time, and although they are comparatively slight the plan may be regarded as correct



with the exception of these slight alterations, but approximately they are as nearly correct as we can get at the present day.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. This plan, Exhibit 1, is the basement of the building as before the fire started?—A. Yes.

Q. And Exhibit 2 is a plan of the ground floor upon which is situated the reading-room of the House of Commons and Senate Chamber?—A. Yes.

Q. Exhibit 3 is the first floor?—A. Yes.

Q. And Exhibit 4 the top floor?—A. Yes.

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Q. Will you point out where the reading-room is?—A. It is situated north of the main door and south of the library.

Q. It is marked "reading-room" on the plan.

Q. Now are you personally familiar with the construction of this building?—A. Not very.

Q. Who would be able to give us full information with regard to their construction and the material?—A. There are a number of men who would be able to do it—there is Mr. Ewart, the Chief Architect, and I think perhaps Mr. Wensley, the Engineer of the building.

Q. I suppose Mr. Ewart would be as familiar as anybody?—A. Yes. Lately we have had the building re-wired, and in doing that I suppose the construction would be bored through and the detail of the construction would be found out more by the staff than anybody else.

Q. What were their names?—A. Mr. Wilson was the Chief Electrician in charge of that work—he would have a very good knowledge of the construction of the walls and floors and things of that kind.

Q. According to this, the reading-room is a building of 70.7 feet by 36.2 feet?—A. Yes, equalling an area of 2,481 square feet.

Q. What would be the height of the walls?—A. That I could not say.

By Mr. Pringle:

Q. I see you have marked very clearly here the occupants of all the different rooms?—A. Yes.

Q. The Speaker's Chambers and the different rooms, so that we will be able to follow closely?—A. Yes, and in addition to that I have taken a list of all the occupants.

(List of Room Numbers and by whom occupied produced as Exhibit No. 5.)

Q. It has already been noted that you are the Chief Architect of the Public Works Department?—A. Yes.

And furthermore witness deposesh not.

Lieutenant-Colonel HENRY R. SMITH, I.S.O., Serjeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons, sworn.

By Mr. White, K.O.:

Q. You have been Serjeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons how long?—A. Twenty-four years.

Q. You are very familiar with the place in which the fire is said to have originated and the surroundings?—A. Yes.

Q. The reading-room of the House of Commons?—A. Yes, I am quite familiar with all of it.

Q. Were you in the House or in the building on the night of the fire?—A. Yes, I was out of the Chamber, but close at hand in the Clerk's office.

Q. Where would that be?—A. The Clerk's office is in the front of the building.

Q. You were not in the House but in the Clerk's office?—A. Yes, talking to him, I was there two or three minutes.

Q. That is in the front of the building?—A. Yes.

Q. When did you first, or how was your attention first attracted to the fire?—A. I went to my own office and got some papers that I wanted and then started back and was met by a dense volume of smoke and some heat—the condition of the atmosphere was then suffocating and I could not get any further.

Q. Where was your office?—A. In the West end of the building but downstairs on the ground floor—it is immediately below the Western part.

Q. Downstairs in the basement?—A. What you call the basement, yes—my floor is on the level of the ground.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. What we want more particularly from you, Colonel Smith, is whether you are the person charged with the responsibility of seeing whether these buildings are properly protected, and we want to know the staff and who they were.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. But coming up from your office you could not go on?—A. No.

Q. Did you hear anything?—A. I heard voices calling "Fire, fire."

Q. Can you fix the time?—A. Yes, that was then just about nine o'clock, and I was absent between four and five minutes.

Q. What is your duty in regard to this building?—A. I have general charge of the House of Commons premises, charge of anything they contain, and am head of the messengers, and sessional staff of servants, pages, charwomen, and all that, and the restaurant.

Q. Have you anything to do with the fire protection?—A. Yes.

Q. What is your duty in regard to that?—A. In conjunction with the Public Works Department we had various engines about the buildings—I think they are called Babcocks—and we have men instructed in what is called "fire drill" to make use of them, and then of course, under the direction of the Public Works Department, there were large hose all through the building capable of being turned on at a moment's notice.

Q. How many of these extinguishers were there?—A. Upwards to twenty.

Q. Were there any in the vicinity of the reading-room?—A. Yes, I think there were two, one at each end.

Q. Inside or outside the room?—A. I am not sure, but just inside or outside—very close at hand.

Q. I suppose you are not familiar or cannot say how many stands of hose there were?—A. No, but the provisions were amply sufficient to reach any point in the building.

Q. And was there any staff whose duty it was to look after the water as well as the fire extinguishers?—A. Yes, the Public Works staff and also the Dominion constables were instructed in that regard—of course what actually happened was that they did go to work but were speedily stifled.

Q. You could not form any idea how that staff was officered or manned?—A. No, that would be outside of my duties. It would be composed only of my own men.

Q. And your own men would have charge of the fire extinguishers?—A. To that extent. At the suggestion of Mr. Hunter, Deputy Minister of Public Works, they were drilled in their use some time ago.

Q. There was a large amount of inflammable material in this reading-room?—A. An immensity of it.

Q. Were the papers hung up or on files?—A. In some cases hung on the wall and placed on the top of a desk and beneath the desks—in fact the room was over-filled—there were too many papers in it for the size of the room.

Q. I do not know whether I asked you if you considered the provision for the extinction of fires sufficient?—A. As far as human ingenuity goes, they were sufficient, but the fact remains the room itself was of an extremely inflammable nature—the oil-cloth on the floor and the paint and papers all tended to make it a place that if a fire started it might readily get beyond control in a short time.

Q. Was the wood painted?—A. Oiled and varnished.

Q. Which would render it more inflammable?—A. Yes.

Q. It was only a short distance from the reading-room to the east corridor of the House of Commons?—A. The reading-room opens into these corridors.

Q. And there is only a short distance to the corner of the Chamber?—A. Yes, only ten or fifteen feet.

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Q. There was a large number of cabinets used?—A. Yes, also varnished wood.

Q. How many men did you have under your control—firemen?—A. There are three.

Q. Were they the ordinary attendants?—A. Two of them, the Curator, Mr. Deacon, and Mr. Hugg, are on the clerk's staff, Mr. Hugg is the assistant curator, and Mr. Spencer, behind me, is on my staff. Those three men divided the duty between them. They are Stanley S. Spencer, John L. Deacon, and Claire Hugg.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. What were their duties?—A. They were in charge of the reading-room, and they had to look after the files, putting the papers on and taking them off.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. How many men altogether did you have whose duty it was to look after the extinguishing of fires if they occurred?—A. I am afraid I cannot tell exactly.

Q. But give it to us as near as you can?—A. There would be nine or ten who, according to my orders, were instructed in the use of this fire apparatus.

Q. They would be apart altogether from the men who would be under the Public Works?—A. Yes, but we were always acting in conjunction with the Public Works.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. It is not clear in my mind upon whom rested the responsibility of policing this building, according to that—did it rest on you or on the Chief Commissioner of the Dominion Police?—A. The Chief Commissioner of Dominion Police provided us with men for that purpose.

Q. Who requisitioned these men—did you, or did he take the responsibility of assigning the proper number of men?—A. In some cases I asked for them.

Q. There is not a divided authority, is there—the authority is yours as Sergeant-at-Arms to look after the House of Commons Building, and if you wanted police you requisitioned the Chief Commissioner?—A. Yes, and he was always kind and prompt in that.

Q. How many Dominion police have you on duty in the House of Commons?—A. There was one on each corridor of the Chamber downstairs, one at the Speaker's door, one at each angle, and upstairs one at the entrance of the visitors' gallery, and one at the entrance to the ladies' gallery.

Q. As custodian of the building, did you consider you had it amply policed?—A. Absolutely so, and I want to make a remark here that it was always understood between Colonel Sherwood and myself, that such men of his force that he sent there should be under my orders while they were in the building.

Q. Quite so—then you considered the building was amply policed?—A. Certainly, and if I could make any comment on it I would say it was rather over-policed.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Were these men present during the whole time or only when the House was in session?—A. Those I mention were only during the session of Parliament.

Q. I mean the session of the House?—A. Well, I mean when the House was in session.

Q. Then you had other men of your own after the House arose?—A. Yes, men of my own on duty all night.

Q. How many?—A. As night watchmen only two, but then of course the doors were locked and the building closed.

By Mr. Pringle:

Q. Do you know whether these fire extinguishers were tested from time to time?
—A. I do not know; I cannot speak of that, I am afraid probably not, but I cannot say positively.

Q. Were these corridors cleaned out every night?—A. Every morning, they began at six and worked until 8.30.

Q. Reading-room and all?—A. Yes, and every corridor and room in the building.

Q. How many men were always on duty in the reading-room apart from the policeman at the door?—A. Never less than one, and sometimes two.

Q. There could not be very much less than one?—A. There were only three.

Q. But there was always one?—A. Oh yes, certainly—you will have every one of these men before you.

Q. Is there anything else you think of that you ought to tell us?—A. I think I have gone fully over the ground. I could not say anything else except of course what others reported to me.

Furthermore witness deposesh not.

FRANCIS R. GLASS, member of Parliament, sworn:

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You are a member of the House of Commons?—A. I am.

Q. You were present in the House on the evening of February third?—A. I was.

Q. Were you in or near the reading-room on that evening?—A. I was in the reading-room.

Q. At what hour?—A. Very close to nine o'clock—I do not know the exact time.

Q. Some time between eight and nine o'clock?—A. Yes. I could define it closer—between 8.30 and 9.

Q. Was there anybody else in the reading-room when you were there?—A. When I entered the room Mr. Northrup was in there, standing at the first desk inside the reading-room.

Q. How long did you remain there?—A. I do not think I was there more than ten minutes.

Q. When you left the reading-room who was in it?—A. When I left the officer was in getting the extinguisher.

Q. The fire originated while you were in there?—A. Yes.

Q. How did it originate or what did you see?—A. As I passed into the reading-room about ten minutes before the fire broke out, I passed down the first desk along the wall, to see if there were any London papers on file, and when I saw they were not I passed on to the second desk where the Ottawa papers were on file, and on the left-hand corner of the second desk I remained reading. To give an idea of how much time I was there, I read the Corridor Notes of the Journal and followed up the Appam report. I was absorbed in reading that, and heard the door opening and people passing in and out, and no person passed in front of me but Sir Thomas White. He came in within two or three minutes after I was in and passed behind me, between the two desks and on to the third desk. He gave a casual glance at the files and I gathered from his attitude the files he wanted were not there, and he retired. I lifted my head as I saw him at the file opposite to me and spoke to him and continued reading and had been only reading a short part of this paragraph when I felt a wave of heat passing up alongside me, as if from a hot air register, and I turned around and almost immediately with my turning I smelt the burning of paper and I stooped down and saw the smoke coming out, and my recollection is that this burning was on the second horizontal part of the desk, of the one behind me—it was well in on the pile of papers. I put up my hands and called the caretaker, thinking they would be around the other desks and no one responded, and I ran to the door and called to the officer and he came in and looked

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at it and rushed out again and then I said: "Where are the fire extinguishers or hose?" and said they had better ring in an alarm. He went out to announce the alarm and to get help and I presume possibly to get the extinguisher—anyway he called the alarm and almost instantaneously there was other help, but he got there ahead and went down the reading-room to the Senate and got an extinguisher off the wall and ran back. I was still in the room—as he came down with it the fire was spreading rapidly and I thought it time the members should be notified, and I stepped outside the door just as he started to operate the extinguisher on the fire—now what happened there I do not know but in an instant the fire gained headway and seemed to develop into a flame of smoke and fire.

By Mr. Pringle:

Q. You were standing at what desk?—A. At the left-hand side of the second desk in the reading room facing the Senate Chamber.

Q. That would be the second desk from the end of the room next to the Senate Chamber?—A. No, next to the Commons Chamber.

Q. Then where the fire originated was where?—A. At the first desk in the reading-room in the rear of me.

Q. You were facing the east?—A. Yes.

Q. And the fire originated at the first desk?—A. Yes.

Q. Had anybody been at that desk, the first desk, during the time you were in the reading-room?—A. When I went in there Mr. Northrup was at the front of that desk—those desks have a double front, and he was at the front of the first desk facing the Senate Chamber.

Q. That would be the west side of the desk?—A. Yes.

Q. And very close to the entrance to the Commons corridor?—A. Yes, and he was reading the second or third file from that corner.

Q. Had anybody else but Mr. Northrup been at that desk during the time you were there?—A. I heard people coming in and out and did not turn to observe them—I was reading.

Q. Then there were people passing in and out?—A. Yes.

Q. But you do not know who they were?—A. Only Sir Thomas White.

Q. You had gone in there about 8.30 or between 8.30 and 9?—A. Yes.

Q. How long had you been at the desk reading when you felt this fire?—I do not think more than from seven to ten minutes.

Q. And did you see the fire?—A. When I turned around.

Q. Where was the fire when you saw it?—A. On the horizontal shelf, on the files underneath the regular desk, well in through the centre, on the second shelf.

Q. Had it gained headway then?—A. It was covering a space of from 15 to 18 inches.

Q. The reason is, I have an article here in which it says:—

Mr. Glass was in the reading-room at the time of the fire. He entered it from the main corridor and took a position at the second desk inside the door to read the Ottawa papers. The fire started directly behind him, and from the way in which it started, Mr. Glass thinks it altogether improbable that it could have begun from a cigar or cigarette. While Mr. Glass was standing at the second desk from the entrance, he noticed that a man came into the desk directly behind him—the first one from the main corridor entrance. The man passed out, but the member did not notice his appearance.

A. Well, that part of the interview is incorrect, as I say during the time I was there I heard the door opening and shutting and did not see or hear any person except Sir Thomas White, because he passed in front of me, but from the time I entered I did not see any person coming in or going out.

Q. Then it says:—

It was just a few minutes after the man went out that Mr. Glass felt a hot wave about his feet. He looked around and saw the papers in the middle of the lower shelf on the first desk burning. The fire was not on the edge of the papers, and for this reason Mr. Glass does not think the files could have caught from the end of a cigar or cigarette.

A. The interview is hardly correct, because interviews are very rarely correct—I said it was hardly probable that a man shaking a cigar and dropping ashes would drop it into the centre, but it would be possible for a man passing to use a match and then shake it and throw it into the centre—that is quite a possible thing.

Q. Then I saw another interview in one of the Toronto papers—I happened to be there that day—the following day—in which you stated that you saw the fire start and it was very small and could have been put out without difficulty, but you called a messenger?—A. That statement is not correct. I do not know who I was talking to that night, but I think it was in the telegraph office, and I said my impression was, when I first saw the fire, it could have been smothered with a blanket or a coat, it was so small—it was not convenient to get at it, but my first thought was an extinguisher would more effectively stop it than anything else.

Q. In view of the knowledge we have in regard to chemical preparations that can be put on paper, and create fire, or I do not suppose you are in a position to express an opinion as to how the fire started?—A. Not the slightest.

Q. Did you see anybody there with a lighted cigar or cigarette or anything with fire?—A. Nothing whatever—I didn't even know I was alone in the room until I turned around.

Q. I have before me, whether correct or not, information in regard to a confession made by a criminal in the United States of America, where a brownish liquid was used to sprinkle on papers or other inflammable material that would remain there undetected and after remaining for a certain time it would cause the material to burst into flames—that is why I am trying to get exactly at what did occur then to see if any possibility of such a thing being used in the reading-room?—A. I would be quite possible but I did not notice any odour of any kind except the burning of paper as I turned around.

Q. And you did not notice anybody there with cigars or cigarettes or anything likely to cause fire?—A. No, sir, as I say I did not notice who came in and passed out.

Q. But you did hear parties coming and going and passing that desk?—A. Yes.

Q. Did that fire spread rapidly?—A. For the first few seconds it did not seem to spread faster than ordinary paper would burn, but it seemed to become wonderfully accelerated in blazing from the time the officer ran to get the extinguisher.

Q. Then when the officer came back with the extinguisher what effect did that have on the fire?—A. As I could see it he had not even time to operate it, for the instant he held it in position he was shot back—the flame enveloped him.

Q. Could you give any idea of the colour of that smoke?—A. Only that it was bright red—I took it for fire—in fact my impression was it seemed as if the smoke turned to fire almost instantly.

Q. Of course you are not a chemist and cannot tell us what the colour of smoke might be from a chemical preparation?—A. No, sir.

Q. But you could speak from the fact in saying that the smoke seemed to be a very reddish colour?—A. Yes—as soon as it developed sufficiently to get through the room it seemed to turn almost like into a blaze.

Q. Did it spread with great rapidity to the other papers and did the flame burst in the same way, that is, a blaze from the other papers?—A. The extinguisher was put on at the time I am speaking of when suddenly there was the burst into flame. I just got out the door and thought the Commons should be notified and turned to go down there but before I got to the Chamber I felt what was called that explosion as if con-

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finer smoke gave kind of a puffout—it would be called an explosion, but it sounded like a sudden release of a big volume of dense smoke and then the corridors became filled, and I announced it to the House, and I could not return the same way—the corridor was filled with smoke.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Just one little point—the papers in which you say the fire was were papers not on file but that had been stored there?—A. As I understand it the leading dailies are on the top of the desk and the other papers from the smaller towns, weeklies and others, are placed on horizontal shelves—a series of them.

Q. How many thicknesses of paper would there be?—A. That would vary.

Q. The reason I ask is this: a batch of papers laying one on top of the other does not burn very rapidly beyond the original one on fire, but if thin they would?—A. The files underneath in that position vary from sometimes one to sometimes four and five.

Q. But there would be only a thin layer?—A. Yes, every file would be spread out.

Q. The shelves inside of that desk were all wooden shelves?—A. Yes.

And furthermore witness deposeseth not.

STANLEY SCOTT SPENCER, being duly sworn:

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You are Assistant Curator?—A. Mr. Hugg is the assistant and I come after him.

Q. And it was your turn in the reading-room that evening?—A. Yes.

Q. When did you go on duty?—A. Seven o'clock.

Q. Were you in the reading-room all the time?—A. No, sir. We have a room where we handle our papers, off the reading-room, Room 30, next to the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms.

Q. It is marked "Curator of Reading-room"?—A. Yes.

Q. That was in connection with the reading-room though?—A. Yes.

Q. You heard the evidence of Mr. Glass—how far would the door of that room be from the desk where Mr. Glass was standing, reading?—A. It is about the centre of the room—that is the Curator's room seems to be in the centre of the room and the first table where Mr. Glass was reading the Ottawa papers—

Q. How far would it be from the desk where he was?—A. Thirty or forty feet.

Q. That is your room would be that from where he was?—A. Yes.

Q. When did you go into that room?—A. It must have been about a quarter to nine.

Q. Was Mr. Glass in the reading-room when you went in?—A. I was putting on my papers when Mr. Glass came in—I spoke to Mr. Northrup before that—he was standing about where the papers were that went on fire, and I said: "I guess we will have a late night to-night," and he said that he was done for the night, and Mr. Glass came in just after that and Mr. Glass said: "They are on fish to-night," and Mr. Northrup said: "It is not a very appropriate night for fish, they should have waited until Friday." Mr. Glass went to the Ottawa papers and I just left them and went into my room.

Q. When you left the only two people were Mr. Northrup and Mr. Glass in there?—A. Yes, that I noticed.

Q. How long did you remain there in the room?—A. I could not have been long in the room.

Q. And when you came out, where did you go then?—A. I heard the noise of somebody running in the hall.

Q. Did you hear Mr. Glass calling you?—A. I did not hear who called—I heard somebody holler.

Q. Did you hear anybody call you as caretaker?—A. No, sir.

Q. Was Mr. Glass in the reading-room when you came out of your room?—A. No, sir.

Q. And when you came out of your room it was because you heard somebody—where?—A. I do not know exactly; I heard somebody holler, as I thought, "Fire," and I ran and saw the fire and started to pull away the papers and I saw I could not do anything as it was running up the walls.

Q. You started to pull the papers away?—A. Yes.

Q. These papers were in a file?—A. Yes.

Q. What kind of files?—A. Wooden files.

Q. And did you pull any of them away?—A. Yes.

Q. And you say it went up the side of the room?—A. Yes, and I could not do anything, and I ran to the desk—

Q. Did the desk above it take fire?—A. I could not say, because when that roar went up I could not see very well with the smoke. I could not get out by the Commons corridor and I ran the other way.

Q. That would be the opposite side from where the fire was?—A. Yes.

Q. And then did you try to make your way around?—A. I grabbed my coat and hat and came out—I came out through the flames and got my ears and face and hands burned, and I fell over Mr. Burrell's secretary when coming out into the Senate side.

Q. Then were there any fire extinguishers on the corridor at that side?—A. There was only one in the reading-room and it was on the Senate side.

Q. Did you get it?—A. No, there were two men in uniform who had run ahead for the extinguisher when I got up to it.

Q. Were they going towards the reading-room?—A. They were at the end towards the Commons Chamber where the fire started.

Q. You went out on the Senate side, and you say there was one extinguisher on that Senate side?—A. That is the one they had, I believe.

Q. Where did they get it—you say they were coming from the Commons side?—A. No, I say they were on the Commons side with the extinguisher.

Q. How did they get there so quickly?—A. It would be them probably I heard hollering when I ran out.

Q. Why do you say it must be that extinguisher?—A. I would not be sure whether or not it was that one, only I heard them say that they got an extinguisher from that side.

Q. Who were they?—A. I think it was Sergeant Carroll—one of them told me that anyway.

Q. There is a door leading out to the corridor there from the reading-room to the Senate?—A. Yes, they would have to run right past the door of the room I was in.

Q. And how would they get around then—is there any passage around until they got around to the front of the building?—A. They would run through to the Commons side—it was clear at first to the Commons side where the fire started first.

Q. There is a board partition along there shown on the plan by pencil?—A. Yes, there is a partition all around the room and papers one above the other hanging up around that wall.

Q. That would be still inside the room?—A. Oh, yes. They could pass by there. The fire started here, I understand, at the first table.

Q. When you came out from the Curator's room, did you go to the reading-room?—A. I ran down there.

Q. This partition is only a framework to hold papers?—A. Yes.

Q. What I want to know is, these men if they got this extinguisher here, they would have to run across here?—A. Yes, that is where they were.

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Q. Why should they run through the whole seventy feet across the room to get to a fire there when they could have gone inside?—A. I do not know that.

Q. Then you really do not know where they got the extinguisher?—A. No.

Q. When you went out you did not go to see where the extinguisher was got from?—A. No. I saw they had one when I went out.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. You were on duty that night?—A. Yes.

Q. What time did you go on duty?—A. Seven o'clock.

Q. Did you see anybody in the reading-room that night smoking or with a lighted cigar or cigarette?—A. I do not remember that I did, but I have seen a good many members going in smoking.

Q. With lighted cigars or cigarettes?—A. Yes.

Q. Would it have been possible for a man to enter there and place a liquid on those papers without you detecting him?—A. If I see any strangers there I put them out—I have orders to that effect.

Q. But strangers have gone in there?—A. Yes, but not lately since policeman are on the two doors.

Q. You think you have the room so guarded, that it would be almost impossible for a stranger to get in there and distribute liquid on these papers?—A. I think so.

Q. Was either Mr. Glass or Mr. Northrup smoking?—A. I could not say—I did not see either of them smoking.

Q. Did you see either of them with a cigar or cigarette?—A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. If you had, don't you think you would detect it?—A. I might have, but as a rule I do not pay any attention to them because if nobody else can't stop them I can't.

Q. Who called your attention to the fire?—A. When I was inside the Curator's room I heard somebody running and hollering.

Q. The Curator's room is where?—A. Almost in the centre of the reading-room with the door open—we have it for sorting our papers, and I heard someone running and hollering.

Q. That is the first thing that drew your attention to the fire?—A. Yes.

Q. What did you find on going into the reading-room?—A. I ran up to the end and I saw the fire and could not get on the other side, and pulled the files from underneath the shelves to try and keep them from catching one to the other, and two men, of whom all I could see was the uniform, came with the fire extinguisher.

Q. How far advanced was the fire when you got on the scene?—A. When I started up that way I could not go between the wall and the first table.

Q. And then you grabbed the files that were on file?—A. Yes, from this side—I stood there until I could not stand it any longer.

Q. Had it spread with great rapidity?—A. Yes.

Q. These files are lying flat on the shelves underneath?—A. Yes, and the others on top.

Q. And the file that evidently caught fire first was lying flat on the shelf?—A. That is the way they were burning.

Q. And you say they burned with great rapidity—did you notice the colour of the smoke?—A. No, but it seemed to be kind of black and bluish smoke to me.

Q. Mr. Glass says it was reddish?—A. It was cloudy to me—I could not see well with the heat, when I started out.

Q. Did the extinguisher have any effect on the flames?—A. No, I thought it made more smoke because the papers are loose and I imagined that it loosened up the papers more and the fire blew right along.

Q. It made more smoke?—A. It seemed to, and to make more fire.

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By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Are there ventilators there?—A. Two in the skylight and both open.

Q. And they are worked with fans, or driven with fans?—A. Yes, from below.

Q. And they were working that night?—A. I think so—they are generally always working.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. Had the fire, at the time you first saw it, got below the shelf upon which the papers were resting that were on fire?—A. I could not say that it got to the floor.

Q. That is it—did you see any fire coming from the floor up?—A. I could not say as to that side, but there was not on the side from which I pulled the papers out.

Q. The doors leading to the Senate lobby are similar to those leading to the House of Commons lobby—swinging doors?—A. Yes.

Q. Was there a policeman standing in both or only in one?—A. Only at one, after 8.30.

Q. Was there a policeman at both doors, up to the time of this fire?—A. No, sir.

Q. At what door was there a policeman?—A. The Commons door.

Q. Then was there anything to prevent a man going in from the Senate side and sprinkling if he wanted to a liquid on these papers?—A. He might, but he could not very well get to the other end.

Q. You were in the curator's room, and if no policeman on the east door what would prevent a man going in and putting a liquid on these papers?—A. The policeman on the other door would naturally see him coming in because he is generally watching.

Q. You think the policeman on the other door having full sight of both doors of the room could see if anybody entered, if on guard?—A. Yes, sir.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. If he came in and was not seen he would have to come in on the Senate side—there is no policeman there?—A. Not after 8.30.

Q. And the fire started near the Commons?—A. Yes.

Q. How far from the door leading to the Commons?—A. About ten feet only.

Q. And a man naturally would scatter it close to where he came in and go back out the way he came?—A. You would think he would.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. Is that policeman always on duty or only when the House is sitting?—A. They are on duty when the House is sitting.

Q. Would they be on duty during recess between six and eight o'clock?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. So there was a man on duty at the time the fire broke out?—A. Yes.

Q. A policeman at the door leading to the House of Commons corridor?—A. Yes.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. The thing is, would it be natural for a person to pass all through the reading room and do this thing at the other end? The files were the same all along and he might as well have put it near the Senate door as to walk the whole distance through the reading-room?—A. Yes.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. You saw no one else there except Mr. Northrup and Mr. Glass?—A. They were the last I saw.

Q. You were not smoking?—A. No, sir.

And furthermore witness deposesh not.

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C. R. STEWART, door-keeper, sworn.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. What is your position in the House of Commons?—A. Chief door-keeper of the House of Commons.

Q. You remember the night of the fire, of course?—A. Yes.

Q. How was your attention first called to it?—A. I was standing outside the door in the lobby, and one of the policemen next the door announced a fire in the reading-room. I ran down and saw the fire at the table—I was at the opposite side of Mr. Spencer, pulling the files out—I kept pulling the files out—to stop the fire, and in the meantime it was going up and it caught in the walls and went up over my head, and the draught started and it came over my head, so I thought it time to get out. I went to the Chamber and no one seemed to know about it. Mr. Simpson, the reporter was in the House, and I announced a terrific fire, and for everybody to get out, and Mr. Simpson took down my words on the "Hansard." When I got to the door I found I had forgotten my coat and I went back to get it, but I could not get it—the blaze was coming up near Sir Robert's room.

Q. What time would that be?—A. "Hansard" has nine o'clock, when I made that announcement.

Q. You say Mr. Spencer was working at the opposite side of the desk to you?—A. Yes.

Q. Was the fire confined at that time to a particular shelf?—A. Yes, that is all I saw.

Q. And you say the fire started to go up the wall—what wall?—A. That wooden partition—the papers are hung by their backs and their leaves are all loose and the blaze caught them.

Q. The fire caught from where it was burning originally in among these papers hanging on this wooden partition and immediately went to the ceiling?—A. Yes, and came out the door too.

Q. Did you hear any explosions?—A. I cannot say that I did—there was a considerable draught and the doors were forced open—it was a roaring noise—the corridor seemed to act like a flue with a tremendous draught.

Q. Did you notice it coming out of the reading-room door?—A. Yes.

Q. Where did it catch first?—A. Going along the corridors—I guess it caught in the members' wardrobes. They were made of pine and everything there was ready to catch.

Q. Did you see a policeman there with an extinguisher?—A. When I went in they were running for the hose and extinguishers. I heard them coming with them, and I was too busy pulling away the papers to notice. I know they were there because I heard them.

Q. Do you know in what direction they were running for the extinguisher?—A. Down towards the smoking-room—just a small corridor from the reading-room.

Q. Towards the Senate?—A. No, it would be more west of the reading-room.

And furthermore witness deposeseth not.

DAVID EWART, I.S.O., sworn.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. What is your position?—A. Consulting Architect for the Department of Public Works.

Q. You have been a long time connected with the building destroyed?—A. Yes, since 1871.

Q. Do you know anything of the material of which these buildings are constructed? A. Principally white pine.

- Q. But the walls?—A. They are stone and brick.
- Q. The walls of the reading-room, for example?—A. The outside walls of the reading-room were stone and brick.
- Q. And the floors of course wood?—A. Yes.
- Q. And all the fittings of the reading-room were wood?—A. Yes, and the gallery of the reading-room.
- Q. There was a gallery around it?—A. Yes.
- Q. Was that of pine too?—A. Yes.
- Q. Was it oiled and varnished?—A. Yes.
- Q. And exceedingly inflammable?—A. Yes.
- Q. You have heard the description by the witnesses who were present when the fire started, of how it started, that it started on the shelves under the reading tables—you are familiar with the place there?—A. Yes.
- Q. And it caught, notwithstanding their efforts, on the files in the walls and went up the walls?—A. Yes.
- Q. What would say from your experience and taking into consideration the character of the wood-work and the walls?—A. That room was changed when the Supreme Court was instituted—that is where they held the first Supreme Court, in that same room, and it was changed to its present shape then.
- Q. I do not suppose you intend to suggest that as a reason for any bad luck?—A. Oh no—but I mean at that date we had no steel files and no steel construction—it was a long while ago.
- Q. What would you say as to the partitions and desks and the whole thing?—A. They were very inflammable.
- Q. And the statement of these witnesses, Mr. Spencer and the last witness, are reasonable, that the fire when it once caught on the varnish, and oil, and wood, would go quickly, as they described?—A. Yes—I think one of the causes of the fire spreading so rapidly was the ceiling of the corridors, which were all wood and the members' wardrobes.
- Q. That is, after it got out of the reading-room?—A. exactly.
- Q. But I am speaking now of the reading-room just in order to see if you corroborate their idea—the fire was a small one apparently at the start when Mr. Glass saw it, and when the assistant caretaker saw it, and the guard tried to extinguish it, but it caught in the pile of papers and went up like a flash?—A. That is what I say—I say it is a very reasonable statement.
- Q. And when it did get out your idea is it rolled along with the ceilings of the corridors of the Commons and the members' cabinets?—A. Yes.
- Q. Do you know anything as to the fire protection, the method of the fire protection adopted by the Department?—A. They had a fire-alarm system in every room.
- Q. That connects with the city fire-alarm?—A. First to a register in the main hall of the building and at the same time with the city.
- Q. And did they have any sprinkling system in the building?—A. None.
- Q. Did you know the hydrants there?—A. I cannot say I have been well acquainted with them—there have been various inspections given on them from time to time, and the City fire chief has at various times looked over the place and suggested where to put them, and we have done that.
- Q. Did you put them where he suggested?—A. Yes.
- Q. And you were quite satisfied that there were sufficient hydrants to cover the fire area?—A. I think so.
- Q. Do you know anything about whether the Department exercised any authority over the men engaged in the building in attending to the fire apparatus, or whether they left it to certain parties?—A. It is principally left to Colonel Sherwood.
- Q. To the Dominion Police?—A. Yes.
- Q. And the Serjeant-at-Arms?—A. Yes.

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Q. I suppose it is jointly—you all jointly work together?—A. Yes.

Q. You furnish the apparatus required and they furnish the men?—A. Yes.

Q. When they require anything they make a requisition to the Department of Public Works and they supply it?—A. Yes.

Q. There are a number of ventilator systems by means of fans?—A. Yes.

Q. Run by electricity?—A. Yes.

Q. There are ventilator shafts in different rooms?—A. For the chamber itself there are two ventilator shafts—in the east, and one in the west—and the fresh air is taken in there and then it was washed.

Q. After it passed through the chamber?—A. No, before it went into the chamber—sprayed—and then it is driven down the chamber and extracted under the members' feet. Each recess is an extraction. That is where it was extracted.

Q. Was there any fan connected with the reading room?—A. I do not think so—the only place where it was extracted from was the Commons Chamber.

Q. And you think there are no ventilator shafts there although the caretaker says there are?—A. I do not think so—but I consider the reason the smoke didn't rise was owing to the Commons drawing it down—the fans were running when the fire started.

Q. And the fans would have the tendency to draw the smoke down?—A. Yes, into the chamber.

Q. From the corridors?—A. From everywhere.

Q. These fans are operating underneath?—A. Yes, they are in connection with the boiler room.

Q. Are the corridors also connected with these fans?—A. When the doors are open they are connected with it.

Q. You think those fans would have the effect of drawing the smoke through the corridors?—A. Yes. The fans were not immediately under the chamber—a little to one side in the boiler room, but of course the flues are under the chamber to the fans.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Taking your whole knowledge of the place, it was a pretty dangerous place to start a fire?—A. Very.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. If one wanted to burn that building, they could not have selected a better part than the reading room?—A. Unless the library.

Q. Would not the reading room have more inflammable matter to start with—loose newspapers—more inflammable matter confined to a smaller space?—A. Yes.

Q. As a matter of fact, those buildings are full of combustible and inflammable matter?—A. Yes.

Q. In the days when these buildings were built, they did not build fireproof buildings? Such as we are having to-day?—A. No.

Q. Do we have to-day an absolutely fireproof building?—A. As a fireproof building, but if you fill a building full of combustible matter it is not fireproof.

Q. You can make walls fireproof?—A. Yes.

Q. But if you fill it with combustible matter a fire will occur just the same?—A. Yes.

Q. Is that woodwork varnished there every year?—A. It was varnished very often.

Q. And that makes it very inflammable?—A. Very.

Q. I am informed and instructed that the floors were all shellacked?—A. Yes.

Q. Is not that a very inflammable material?—A. It is—there is no doubt about that.

Q. Would the burning of these varnishes and shellac, would that cause a great volume of smoke?—A. Oh, yes.

Q. Much more smoke than the burning of a plain wood floor unvarnished?—A. Oh,

yes.

Q. You hadn't a sprinkler system in the building?—A. No.

Q. Was it ever considered, the advisability of putting in a moderate up-to-date sprinkling system?—A. Not that I remember.

Q. Would it have been practicable and feasible?—A. In some places you could but in other places it would be difficult.

Q. But could it have been done in this reading-room, for instance?—A. I believe it might have.

Q. But you were Chief Architect of Public Works to a very short time ago and now Consulting Architect, and as such you never considered the advisability of doing it?—A. No.

Q. But you did consider the putting in of up to date fire extinguishers?—A. Yes.

Q. And those you had in?—A. Yes.

Q. And also in connection with the water—you had a good system? The new wing is practically fireproof is it?—A. Yes. Of course it might be made a little more so. All there is that is not fireproof are the doors—it stood very well; there is nothing wrong with it.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. What seem'd to have saved the library was the metal doors?—A. Yes.

Q. Those have only been put on in late years?—A. It is some years ago. But they were put on since that building was put up.

Q. If metal doors had been shutting out the reading room from these corridors, what do you think would have happened?—A. I am afraid the fire would have got over the top of the doors, owing to the construction—it might have saved it for a little while, to give them a chance, but of course, judging from what we hear about it, supposing there were metal doors there it is not likely they would have been shut.

Q. Why would there not be time to shut them?—A. Because people get so confused they hardly know what to do.

And furthermore witness deposeseth not.

The investigation thereupon adjourned for luncheon.

After luncheon:

THOMAS SMITH MOORE, sworn:

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You are a Dominion constable?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. I understand you were on duty at the reading-room door when the fire occurred on the 3rd of February?—A. Yes, sir.

Q. At what time did it start?—A. As near as I can say between 8.45 and 9.

Q. When were you first aware that there was a fire there?—A. When a man inside the room called out that there was a fire.

Q. Previous to that how long had you been on duty?—A. From 7.30.

Q. That would be an hour and a quarter—had you seen any strangers going into that reading-room?—A. No, sir.

Q. From where you were standing at the door on the Common side of the reading-room, could you see across that passage-way to the door leading to the Senate?—A. Yes, sir, I could.

Q. And did you see any strangers going into the reading-room from either entrance?—A. No, sir.

Q. Who did you see, if anybody, in that reading-room?—A. None in particulars except members.

Q. Could you give the names?—A. No, sir, we don't pay particular attention to them.

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Q. You were here when Mr. Glass was examined this morning?—A. I could not remember seeing him there.

Q. Do you know Mr. Northrup?—A. Yes.

Q. Did you see him there?—A. I may have, but I do not remember.

Q. I suppose you have a general idea of the members—you know them by sight and members pass you, as a matter of course?—A. Yes.

Q. Was there any lady in there?—A. No, sir, I didn't see any lady.

Q. Well, you cannot say who the member was who said there was a fire there?—A. I would not say for certain—when I saw Mr. Glass here this morning it came to me that he was the man.

Q. Then what did you do?—A. As soon as he called that there was a fire in the reading-room, I ran into the door far enough to see the fire, I saw the place.

Q. Where was it?—A. Underneath the second desk from the door of the Commons side.

Q. Then what did you do?—A. I ran out through the door and called to Mr. Stewart who was at the entrance to the Serjeant-at-Arms door.

Q. That is the next door?—A. Yes. I called to him that there was a fire in the reading-room and I turned and ran back to the other end of the corridor next to the Senate side.

Q. Through the reading-room across to the Senate side?—A. Yes, and took the extinguisher off the hook and ran back and turned it on until the flames forced me out of the room.

Q. Where were the flames by that time—they had set fire to the desk I suppose?—A. I could not say that, but the papers were all burning around it.

Q. On the side of the wall?—A. Yes, it was blazing up the wall.

Q. When you turned on the fire extinguisher what effect had it on the fire?—A. It took the fire down on the side I had the extinguisher on.

Q. It seemed to work?—A. Yes.

Q. And did it throw a proper stream with considerable force?—A. Yes.

Q. Did you notice anything the matter with the extinguisher?—A. No, sir, nothing.

Q. Then the fire drove you back?—Yes.

Q. The fire was not on the floor?—A. No, sir, I do not think so—it seemed to be coming from the bottom shelf of the desk.

Q. How many of these shelves were there?—A. I think there were four.

Q. And the bottom shelf was how far from the floor?—A. About a foot from the floor.

Q. You stood there where you were until the fire forced you to retreat—did you drop the extinguisher then?—A. I backed out of the room with the extinguisher still on the fire and I did not drop it until half-way down the corridor where Mr. Stewart was standing—I dropped it there.

Q. Mr. Stewart is the door keeper at the sergeant-at-arms entrance?—A. Yes.

Q. And where did you go then?—A. Around the front corridor and back up to the Senate and took the hose off the stand in the Senate corridor and turned it on the fire in the reading room. I called to someone to turn the water on and it was done immediately and we directed the water on from the Senate side.

Q. The draught of it was mostly towards the Commons and you ran to the Senate side so as to be able to fight it?—A. Yes.

Q. You got into the reading room with the nozzle?—A. Yes. One of the constables held the swinging door open.

Q. Who was present just at that time on the Senate side—was Dr. Reid there?—A. Yes, he was—he had gone into his office a short while before that and he stepped up behind me and said: "I am here."

Q. You had spoken to somebody about him being there?—A. Yes.

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Q. What did he say?—A. I heard him passing the remark about the pictures or that some person ought to take the pictures down.

Q. And you kept the stream on through the open door?—A. Yes.

Q. Was there smoke coming out that direction?—A. Yes, but not once.

Q. But not much flame?—A. Not at first—not when I got to it first there.

Q. Who was assisting you?—A. Constable Miller, and Constable Knox was holding the door open.

Q. And you took turns in fighting the fire?—A. We were both on the hose until the smoke was so strong we could not stay and we took turns, one holding it while the other went to the window for air.

Q. But the fire got past you towards the Senate room?—A. No, sir—the blaze was through the door several times but I kept the water right on it.

Q. Did you see a messenger of the Senate in the reading room?—A. Yes, he came out shortly afterwards and helped us.

Q. How long were you there before the city brigade arrived?—A. I am sure half an hour perhaps longer.

Q. And then you, I suppose, worked together with them?—A. Yes, until they did not need us any more—they got their own hose in and they did not want us any longer.

Q. Was the pressure on the hose when you got it on—was there any pressure?—A. Yes, very good.

Q. And the extinguisher worked very satisfactorily until you could not use it any longer and the hose worked satisfactorily?—A. Yes.

Q. Do you know what the floor of that room was covered with?—A. No, sir, I could not say exactly what the floor was covered with.

Q. The blaze, when you saw it, could not have possibly come from downstairs, from below?—A. No, sir—I do not think so.

Q. And the only person you saw coming out of the reading-room after your attention was drawn to the fire was the member who you think is Mr. Glass?—A. Yes.

Q. Did you see anybody going in then?—A. Yes, sir—the last one who went in was Mr. De Witt Foster, the ex-Member.

Q. When did he go in?—A. Not more than five minutes before the fire started.

Q. And did you see him coming out?—A. No, sir.

Q. Now if there is anything else you know in regard to the fire let us know it, or have you said all?—A. There was a lot more I could tell of what I did during the night, but nothing concerning the origin of the fire. After the firemen took it in charge I went to the Debates office and tried to get to the fire through the courtyard—that was right from the front entrance.

Q. But there was a witness here this morning, Mr. Spencer, who said he went in and started to pull the newspapers off this desk?—A. I did not see him.

Q. It was the extinguisher at the Senate side you got?—A. Yes.

Q. Was there an extinguisher on the Commons side?—A. I do not think so, but I could not say.

Q. It was in the reading-room next the Senate Chamber?—A. Yes.

Q. And the hose-stand of which you used the hose was that outside the reading-room or inside?—A. It was in the corridor about half-way down across the corridor—that is the corridor at the back of the Chamber.

Q. Straight in line with the reading-room?—A. Yes.

And furthermore witness deposeth not.

PAUL MILLER, sworn.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You were on duty the evening of the fire in what portion of the House?—

A. On the visitors' gallery door.

Q. About what time?—A. I went on at 7.30.

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Q. And continued on until the alarm? What time was that?—A. About seven minutes to nine.

Q. Do you know who it was gave the alarm?—A. No—some one shouted it in the Commons chamber.

Q. Did you hear that very distinctly?—A. I did hear the word "fire" very distinctly, but I saw the Speaker jump off the chair and all the members got up and I thought it was a fire.

Q. Did you run out to assist?—A. Yes.

Q. Were there many people in the gallery?—A. Very few.

Q. Who did you see when you ran to the reading-room?—A. Constable Moore and Constable Knox and quite a few other gentlemen there; but the only one I recognized was Dr. Reid, the Minister of Customs.

Q. Did you notice anybody closing the Senate doors?—A. Yes, after coming downstairs, I noticed some one closing the Senate door when I was crossing the main lobby—the gentleman locked them and I went to the reading-room and I was there in time to spread the hose and turn on the water.

Q. Are you the constable who helped Mr. Moore in taking turns at the nozzle?—A. Yes.

Q. And Constable Knox was there too?—A. Yes, holding the door open.

Q. Was the fire well advanced by that time?—A. When I first got there it was mostly smoke and the fire seemed mostly at the end of the Commons—I spread the hose from the Senate side and the fire seemed towards the Commons door.

Q. At the end of the little corridor that passes between the wall and the wooden partition?—A. Yes.

Q. Did you see anybody using fire extinguishers?—A. No, sir.

Q. It was done before you came down, I suppose—what kind of pressure did you have from the hose?—A. A good pressure.

Q. How long did you stay there?—A. We were there half an hour or so before the firemen came—we let them in through the Speaker's door—that is the Senate Speaker's door.

Q. And they took charge and you assisted them?—A. After they took charge the smoke was practically drifted away—it was going the other way and the fire was practically burned out then.

Q. And it had passed from the reading room into the Commons corridor?—A. Yes.

Q. It was burning pretty briskly there?—A. Yes—of course we did not know how far it was going on the other side, but it was pretty well checked down on the Senate side.

Q. Did you continue with the hose?—A. The firemen came first and took our hose and it was not working very good on the Senate Chamber, and Inspector Parkinson said to let any firemen in and I stood on the door until I left.

Q. Did anybody else go and help you with the hose?—A. Only one man, Mr. Perkins, a messenger in the Senate, I think.

Q. Did you hear any explosion at the time of the fire?—A. No, sir.

Q. When you say it was pretty well burned out on the Senate side you mean in the reading-room?—A. Yes—it was pretty nearly getting out in the corridor on us, but we got it down and it went the other way towards the Commons side.

Q. Did it appear to be in more than one place?—A. No, sir, not that I could see in the reading-room.

Q. You say you could see very little when you went there first but as soon as you saw the fire down a little you located it at one place?—A. Yes. It had all got up and the roof was beginning to fall in at that time.

Q. You did not see it in any more than one place?—A. No, sir.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. Which corridor did you see the fire in?—A. The West.

Q. And which one?—A. The one running north and south.

Q. Which corridor did you go along, the East or West?—A. I came down from the gallery across by the lobby—I could just see up the corridor.

Q. That would be the East corridor?—A. Yes.

Q. Was that on fire when you came down?—A. Just a few flames running along, seemingly running on the oil on the floor.

Q. It had got into those wardrobes at that time?—A. No, sir.

Q. Did you detect any odour of any kind apart from smoke?—A. No, sir, it was a very strong smoke.

Q. But you could not tell whether there was any chemicals mixed with it?—A. No, sir.

And futhermore witness deposesh not.

JAMES EDWARD KNOX, sworn:

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You are a constable on the Dominion Police Force?—A. Yes.

Q. And on the night of the fire you were on duty at the House of Commons?—A. Yes.

Q. In uniform?—A. No, sir, in plain clothes.

Q. Then you would have supervision over all?—A. Yes, I was all through the building—I was every place.

Q. That is the usual thing for one or more constables to be in plain clothes, in addition to those in uniform?—A. Yes.

Q. Now when you first saw the fire, where were you, or when you first heard of it?—A. I was standing at the first floor at the elevator, at the Post Office Department of the House of Commons.

Q. And what did you do?—A. When I heard the shout of fire I ran to the reading-room.

Q. That is down the east corridor?—A. Yes, on the Commons side, to the reading-room.

Q. What did you see?—A. When I went to the door the first who appeared to me was Constable Moore with the fire extinguisher on the flames.

Q. Where was the fire?—A. The fire was on the low shelf on the second desk from the Commons side.

Q. On the lowest shelf?—A. Yes.

Q. The one next the floor?—A. Yes.

Q. Did you see fire in any other part of the reading-room except in that place, when you went there?—A. No, sir.

Q. Was there much of a blaze at the time?—A. Very little then—just about two papers on fire, when I witnessed it then.

Q. You saw him using the fire extinguisher?—A. Yes.

Q. Did the fire extinguisher have any effect either in increasing the flames or reducing them?—A. It reduced them but with the force of the fire extinguisher on the papers, it turned the papers up and the flames got hold of them and then it spread—it spread it all around. The stream of the fire extinguisher is only the size of your finger and the area of the fire was too wide for it, and therefore it caught on the top and took the whole desk up with it and the papers on the top took fire, and they spread to the next, and then to the papers on the wall, and then the papers on the wall went.

Q. Who kept the door open—was it a swing door?—A. I was inside the room with Constable Moore.

Q. Did you notice any draughts in the place?—A. Not to any extent at all.

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Q. The flames caught in the papers quickly and did they appear to run rapidly on the wall?—A. When it caught on the walls it went very rapidly then.

Q. Did you stay with Constable Moore?—A. Yes, until he dropped the fire extinguisher. It was the heat that forced us to retreat out of the reading-room into the Commons side.

Q. And he dropped the extinguisher and you went around to the Senate side and took the House on the Senate side?—A. Yes.

Q. You took the hose off the stand and turned on the water—or who turned on the water?—A. I think it was Constable Miller.

Q. Now, when the water was turned on, what did you notice? Was the water pressure good?—A. Yes, it was very good, because it nearly knocked me down myself—that is how I got wet, the force of the water.

Q. Holding the nozzle?—A. No, the nozzle was not through then—I had to hold the door open for them to put the hose through.

Q. Who did you notice there, if anybody, besides yourself and Constable Miller?—A. Hon. Dr. Reid and Mayor Martin of Montreal.

Q. And you went into the reading-room with the hose?—A. No, we were just standing at the opening of the door between the two doors.

Q. And you started playing water on the fire?—A. Yes—at this time there was no flame on the Senate side at all—it was all on the Commons side.

Q. How long did you remain there playing the hose?—A. About a quarter of an hour.

Q. And had the water any effect on the fire?—A. Yes, we had a good result, because if we were not there the fire would have spread—the fire came right to the door and the flames were warming the door up so I could hardly hold it any longer and the flames came right through and they had to retreat back with the hose.

Q. Did you see anybody you knew outside the constables and beside Dr. Reid and Mayor Martin?—A. There were one or two others but I could not say who they were.

Q. Were they people you had been in the habit of seeing around the House?—A. Yes, there was one other member there too.

Q. Would you know if he was the man examined this morning, Mr. Glass?—A. No, sir, I know Mr. Glass well.

Q. Do you know Mr. Foster?—A. Yes.

Q. Did you see him there?—A. No, sir.

Q. Did you see any one in the corridor on the Senate side?—A. No, there was no one when I left, Constable Moore said to go and get help to pull the hose back, and I left and at this time the smoke was coming out and they were clearing out the people at the front, and some refused to go, and I could get no help. I stayed there two minutes and got Constable Sleeman and said to come back and give us a hand with the hose on the Senate side—when we started to go back some one had locked the Senate door and we could not get back.

Q. And did you try to get around by any other way?—A. Yes, down by the basement, and came up by the Senate Speaker's, but all the corridors were filled—the further I went the worse the smoke got and I started to go back and I was pretty near being lost there because I could not get back with smoke and could not find the door I went through. I had to stand at one door two or three minutes to get breath.

Q. What time did the lights go out on the Senate side?—A. Eleven o'clock—that was the last time I was in the Senate.

Q. Did you make a statement that the lights went out at 10.30?—A. No, that was on the Commons side.

By Mr. Pringle, K.U.:

Q. Whose voice did you hear giving the alarm of "fire?"—A. The first I heard was Constable Helmer.

Q. And you went immediately to the reading room?—A. Yes.

Q. And when you got there the fire was in the first or second of these newspaper stands?—A. In the second on the Commons side.

Q. I was under the impression Mr. Glass said he was standing at the second and the fire broke out in the first?

Mr. WHITE, K.C.: No, I think Mr. Glass said he was standing at the second and the fire broke out behind him.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. Mr. Glass said he was standing at the second desk and that the fire originated in the first desk coming from the House of Commons corridor—you were under the impression when you saw the fire first it was at the second desk?—A. Yes.

Q. These are double desks?—A. Yes.

Q. Mr. Glass evidently took it in as the one desk, it being the first desk of double size?—A. No, it was the second desk.

Q. Your recollection is, where you first saw the fire was the second desk and not at the first?—A. Yes, it would be impossible—where he was reading it would be right under him. He says it started at the first desk, and that would be at his back. Where I saw the fire, it would be right underneath where he would be.

Q. You are very clear when you first saw the fire it was at the second desk?—A. Yes.

Q. Mr. Glass says he stood at the second desk with his back towards the first desk and his face towards the Senate, and the fire occurred behind him.—A. There was no fire on the first desk when I entered the room.

Q. You are clear there was no fire at the first desk?—A. Quite clear.

Q. What fire you saw was under the second desk?—A. Yes.

Q. And that was the only one you saw in the reading room?—A. Yes.

Q. And it was from that fire that the fire spread?—A. Yes.

Q. I think you told Mr. White that these walls were just one mass of loose papers and that the fire jumped into them and it was then beyond your control?—A. Yes. I might say that this smoking in the reading room has been a regular occurrence, because I was through it often and saw members often and often smoking in this place.

Q. I understand it was absolutely contrary to rule?—A. Not in our case—our rules are that members can smoke any place in the building, but no other individuals except members.

And furthermore witness deposesh not.

Constable C. E. HELMER, sworn.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You are also a member of the Dominion police force?—A. Yes.

Q. And were on duty the night of the fire?—A. Yes, I went on duty at 7.30.

Q. Where were you stationed?—A. From 7.30 to 8.30 on the northwest corner of the Senate lobby, that would be outside the reading-room.

Q. But on the Senate side?—A. Yes.

Q. When was your attention first drawn to the fire?—A. To the best of my judgment I would say between 8.45 and 9 o'clock.

Q. By whom?—A. C. J. Stewart, chief door-keeper of the House of Commons.

Q. The gentleman examined this morning?—A. Yes.

Q. And he told you there was a fire in the reading room?—A. Yes.

Q. And what did you do then?—A. I ran back as fast as I could and saw the fire was in a pile of papers in the second reading stand in the bottom shelf.

Q. That is the second reading stand from the House of Commons side?—A. Yes.

Q. Just as described by the last witness?—A. Yes.

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 72a

Q. You saw the pile of papers burning there and who was in the room at that time?—A. Constables Knox and Moore were the only ones I noticed. Constable Moore was playing the Babcock on the flames.

Q. Did it appear to have any effect?—A. From an instantaneous glance, it seemed to work all right, but I could not say what effect it had on the flames.

Q. You were looking across the reading-room from the Senate side?—No, the Commons side.

Q. Then you were looking quite close to it?—A. At an angle of 45 degrees about. Constable Moore says he was standing between the second and third reading desks, playing the fire extinguisher.

Q. And it appeared to be working all right as far as you saw?—A. Yes. I ran up the east side lobby of the House of Commons and called Sergeant Carroll and told him there was a fire in the reading-room, and we went down as fast as possible, and saw the fire was gaining such proportions that the extinguisher was no use, and we retired to the Speaker's entrance, about fifty feet, and got the hose and turned it on but the fire got to such proportions we had to retire.

Q. That would be in the north corridor?—A. Yes, in the House of Commons, right alongside the Speaker's apartments.

Q. And the fire was then coming down the corridor?—A. At that time it was coming out of the top of the reading-room door in large flames.

Q. It had taken in the corridor?—A. I could hardly say, but it had got such proportions we could not face it and had to retire.

Q. And then you went to warn the people?—A. Yes, to the House of Commons and called fire.

Q. Did you hear any explosion?—A. None whatever.

And furthermore witness deposeth not.

JOHN L. DEACON, sworn.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. What is your position?—A. Curator of the Reading Room.

Q. You were not on duty the evening of the fire?—A. No.

Q. Who are your assistants?—A. Claire Hugg and S. S. Spencer.

Q. The two men examined here to-day?—A. Yes.

Q. Who should have been on duty that night at that time?—A. I should have been on—we changed off—Mr. Spencer was to take two days and I was to take two days. Mr. Spencer was on his right hour, as far as that is concerned.

Q. What is your method—have you anything to do in case of fire, any instructions from anybody in regard to fire appliances in case of fire?—A. No, sir.

Q. Not from the Sergeant-at-Arms or anybody else?—A. No.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. You are the one in charge of the reading room?—A. Yes.

Q. What is your instruction in regard to waste paper?—A. It is put in a basket and carried away in the morning.

Q. Is that done regularly?—A. Oh, yes, every morning.

Q. On the night of this fire were there any waste-paper baskets lying around the reading room?—A. No, they were in Room 30, a little room off that.

Q. But your instructions are that no waste paper is allowed to be around the reading room and the waste is taken up every morning?—A. Yes, the baskets are emptied and I always pick up any that is noticed.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Who has authority over you?—A. Dr. Flint.

Q. That is the Clerk of the House of Commons?—A. Yes.

Q. Have you any instructions from your superior as to smoking in the reading room?—A. The last time I had instructions was when the late Speaker White was there—he told me to request the members not to smoke, and I only spoke to one man, and when I went in two or three days after to see the Speaker he asked me about that and said that the gentleman had told him. He told the Speaker that I had told him—he asked me who it was that I told him it was Deputy Speaker Bergeron—and that was the last instructions I got.

Q. The habit was, whether right or wrong, that members went in there and smoked?—A. Yes, and the reporters too.

Q. Did anybody else?—A. Well, any friends who went in with the members.

Q. You were not there when the fire started?—A. No, I left at 5.30.

Q. Have you been present during the examinations this morning?—A. No.

Q. It is said by some witnesses that this reading room was filled with papers, and the desks and everything made of pine?—A. There are four made of pine and I think the last two new ones were made of hardwood.

Q. And the partitions on which the files were hung?—A. They are made of pine.

Q. And the gallery of pine?—A. I think so.

Q. What was the floor covered with?—A. A composition of rubber—about half an inch thick.

Q. It seems to be said that this is particularly inflammable and reliable to combustion?—A. My impression was that it would not burn at all.

Q. Not the floor but the walls?—A. Oh yes, those were.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. Was the floor shellacked lately?—A. Not to my knowledge, never oiled or shellacked.

Q. The architect said not long ago the floor had been varnished or shellacked?—A. Well, not that I know of—I think the library was shellacked.

Mr. WHITE, K.C.: I think he referred to the corridor.

And furthermore witness deposeth not.

CLARE S. HUGG, sworn:

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You are one of the assistant curators?—A. Yes.

Were you on duty the evening of the fire?—A. Until seven o'clock.

Q. Had you noticed any suspicious persons there?—A. No, hardly any person from 5.30 to 7 o'clock in the reading-room going through.

Q. There was nothing extraordinary that you noticed?—A. No.

Q. You left there at seven o'clock?—A. Yes.

Q. And you really know nothing about it?—A. Nothing whatever, except that. And furthermore witness deposeth not.

RÉSÉ SMITH, sworn.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Just you tell us what you know about this?—A. I am a page in the House of Commons and I was sent on a message for Mr. Elliott, the member, and was just going out the door and heard some person in the reading room shouting "fire," and I ran in and on the first shelf I started taking off the papers and pitching them back over, and the top got worse.

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 72a

By Mr. Pringle, K.O.:

Q. The first desk?—A. Yes, right near the door.

Q. That is where you first saw the fire, on the first stand right near the door?—
A. Yes.

Q. And when you first saw it in what condition was it?—A. It had just started—
it was in the middle of the first stand.

Q. How large would the fire be when you first saw it?—A. It was taking on the
wall—

Q. Was it taking on the wall or on the papers on the stand?—A. It was taking
on the wall.

Q. The others think it took on the papers or the shelf of the stand?—A. Yes.

Q. And where was it when you first saw it?—A. On the stand.

Q. On one of the shelves of the stand?—A. Yes.

Q. Are you sure it was on the first stand as you entered the reading room coming
from the House of Commons?—A. Yes.

Q. What did you do when you saw it?—A. I started to take off the papers from
the shelf that were not burning, and to pitch them back, and the flames started to get
pretty bad and I ran out in the lobby and ran out the front way.

Q. Did you see the constable going with the extinguisher?—A. When I went in
there the constable had the extinguisher.

Q. And you say the fire was very small when you first saw it and then it reached
over to the papers on the side of the wall?—A. Yes.

Q. And after that?—A. Then I say it got pretty bad and I ran out then.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Did you hear any explosion?—A. No, sir.

Q. Did you detect any smell other than that of fire?—A. No, sir.

Q. Is the stand a long thing?—A. Yes.

Q. And extended from the door you came in at to along the Senate side?—A. No,
the Senate is over there.

Q. But it went along the north?—A. Yes.

Q. Where was the constable with the extinguisher?—A. There at the second stand.

Q. The second shelf of that stand?—A. No, the next shelf of that stand.

Q. What do you mean by shelf?—A. The second table—'ere is the first table
and the second.

Q. What was he doing at the second table?—A. He had the extinguisher on the
first one.

Q. Playing on it?—A. Yes, trying to put it out.

Q. At the first table?—A. Yes.

Q. You did not stay there very long?—A. No, sir, I didn't.

Q. Any of the papers that you moved, were any of them on fire at all?—A. Not
at all.

Q. Then how far were you from the fire?—A. About five feet.

Q. Then the constable was between you and the fire?—A. No, I was at his left
side.

Q. And you say, though, the fire had reached the wall and was going up the wall?
—A. Yes.

Q. Going up pretty quickly?—A. Yes, I think it did.

Q. Are you sure it did?—A. I am quite sure it did.

And furthermore witness deposeth not.

THOMAS WENSLEY duly sworn, deposed:

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. What position do you hold in the Civil Service?—A. Chief Engineer of the Parliament Buildings.

Q. Were you at the buildings at the night of the fire?—A. Yes.

Q. What do your duties consist of?—A. I have to see that the place is properly heated and ventilated for which there are a number of fans—two fans about twenty feet above the skylight in the House of Commons and two fans down in the boiler house, one an exhaust and the other a blower, and also another exhaust immediately under the centre of the reading room—these were all in operation.

Q. Was there any connection or any draft from that exhaust immediately under the reading room from the reading room itself?—A. Yes, it would be drawn down and discharged into main chimney.

Q. You do not know anything about the construction of the building?—A. In what way?

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. There are a number of ventilators in that reading room?—A. A number of coils.

Q. Are they connected with the ventilating system?—A. No.

Q. A number of air gratings?—A. Only two. Do you mean the registers on the side of the walls?

Q. Yes, what are those?—A. The room there was formerly heated by them. That was the time when that room was a library.

Q. Was there any connection between your ventilator apparatus and the reading room?—A. There was one exhaust connected with the reading room situated immediately under the centre of the reading room.

Q. There is a grating there?—A. Two gratings in the floor.

Q. What is the effect—does the ventilator apparatus draw the air out?—A. Yes, sucks the air out of the chamber—that is out of the reading-room.

Q. Yes—is there anything that brings in a current of fresh air through the reading-room?—A. Only through the door.

Q. What effect would that have in the event of fire?—A. It would naturally draw it in towards the centre of the reading-room.

Q. Would it have the effect of accelerating the fire?—A. I do not think so— I do not think it would be strong enough for that.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Not speaking of the fire itself, but what effect would it have on the smoke?—A. I think it ought to retain it in the room.

Q. Mr. Ewart suggested the idea that the fans provided for the ventilation of the Commons Chamber might have the effect of drawing the fire out of the reading-room in the direction of the corridors?—A. I do not think that could possibly be—not to my mind. We have a pressure of air in the Chamber from above, but if any inward draft caused by the fans it would be down close to the floor. When that fire started I was twenty or thirty feet on top of the Commons Chamber at those fans and when I came down from those fans at about nine o'clock I heard a noise downstairs—I crossed the sky-light and came down to the second floor and there was no smoke there—I could go from one end to the other, but when I got to the ground floor I could not see my hand before my face.

Q. The smoke was coming from the reading-room?—A. Yes, and in trying to get across I ran into one of the marble columns and when in the corridor where we usually go to the boiler I could not go down at all the heat was so intense so I had to go over to the Senate.

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 72a

Q. Have you since the fire inspected the basement under the reading-room?—A. Yes—that is all right—intact.

Q. So the fire could not have come from below?—A. No. But the room occupied by the Hon. Mr. Burrell, the ceiling is slanting down but the other ceiling under the reading-room there is nothing wrong with it except damaged by water.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. Where the corridors ran and the wardrobes for the members, is there a space between that roof above and the galleries?—A. That is a panel roof.

Q. What is between that panel roof and the floor above?—A. That is concrete.

Q. Is there an open space there?—A. No, none.

Q. My recollection is that the gallery slopes down?—A. Well, there is an open space under the gallery—that raises up.

Q. Well, there would be an open space?—A. Yes.

Q. Once the fire got into that what would happen?—A. It would burn up.

Q. There would be a great current of air?—A. Yes, there would be right around there. If the fire got in there our exhaust would draw from that as well.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. And there was no fire up where you were?—A. No, sir.

Q. Did you get to the fire, or see the fire?—A. No, I could not—the corridor was so full of smoke I worked my way down to the boiler room.

Q. What are the walls of the reading room?—A. Brick—the outer wall is stone lined with brick in keeping with the rest of the building. Next to the Library is brick and the one next to the Commons is partly brick and partly stone, because it carried the ventilating towers.

Q. Do you know any reason why people might imagine they heard an explosion while the water was being poured on the fire?—A. I do not—I never heard any explosion—the only one I heard was when the roof and towers came down. I did not hear any explosion; there might have been but I do not know anything about it.

Q. Your part is all right now?—A. Yes, we are heating three parts of the building now.

And furthermore witness deposeth not.

FREDERICK A. WILSON, duly sworn, deposed:—

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. You are electrician in charge of the Parliament Buildings?—A. I am in charge of the rewiring.

Q. You are employed by the Public Works Department?—A. Yes.

Q. And in any rewiring you had to do you had to go through nearly all the walls?—A. Yes.

Q. Have you anything different to say than what has been said by Mr. Ewart and the others in regard to the construction of the building?—A. I heard Mr. Ewart, and to my knowledge it is just similar to what Mr. Ewart said.

Q. You have nothing new to offer in that regard?—A. Nothing.

And your electric apparatus is pretty near all right?—A. It is still intact except in the burnt section. I have a plan of what we have done in the way of rewiring.

(Plan produced as Exhibit 6.)

Q. You were not there the night of the fire?—A. Yes, I reached there at half-past ten.

Q. You know nothing of its origin?—A. No.

By His Honour Judge MacTavish:

Q. What caused the lights to go out? I understand they went out at 9.30?—A. No, at a quarter to eleven—they all went out because of a short circuit from the main

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feeder feeding the new wing, and I put them on in ten minutes and they remained on until morning.

Q. Somebody said they went out at nine o'clock in the House of Commons?—A. I was not there; I know around the Commons and the Senate lobby they were burning there while I was there.

Q. If the lights had caused the fire would the lights have gone out instantly?—A. Yes, instantly.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. There are different circuits?—A. Yes, about forty-eight circuits.

Q. It would only effect the circuit where the fire was?—A. Yes.

Q. You know nothing of what took place until after your arrival?—A. That is all.

And furthermore witness deposesh not.

EDGAR STANSFIELD duly sworn, deposed:

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. What is your occupation?—A. Chemist in the fuel-testing division of the Mines Branch.

Q. How long have you been engaged in that occupation?—A. Five years in Ottawa and was doing similar work for five years in Montreal for the Government.

Q. Are you a graduate of any university?—A. Of Manchester University.

Q. What degrees do you hold from there?—A. Master of Science.

Q. You have heard the evidence here to-day in regard to this fire which took place on Thursday night—in your opinion could that fire have originated from the use of chemicals placed in the reading-room?—A. I think it would have been possible.

Q. Would it not, if the fire had started from chemicals been more likely that the fire would have broken out in several places rather than just one place?—A. I suppose that would depend upon the amount of time that the man had to plant the material.

Q. Is it not a simple chemical process to place a solution on newspapers which when it dries out causes the paper to take fire?—A. It is quite simple.

Q. Will you show us that process?—A. Yes, sir.

(At this juncture Mr. Stansfield poured a small quantity of liquid upon a newspaper and in five minutes according to time taken the newspaper burst into a flame.)

The WITNESS: This, as you see, took about five minutes to inflame, but it might be arranged to take longer.

Q. My reason for asking this is, that we have received through the Dominion Police a report, whether correct or not, that a certain fire bug in the State of Ohio has made an admission that certain fires were caused by the use of a liquid which was placed on inflammable material and which in a short time caused a fire, and I find from this information that they tested in the Fire Marshall's office a bottle of material found in the fire bug's possession, who is now serving a term in the State prison—they tested it on various materials and the time varied from twenty to thirty minutes in which it remained dormant—this time would give a culprit ample time to escape—now, I want to know for my own information whether such a solution could be used and not easily detected, whether an man could go into the reading-room and put that solution on and walk out and in half an hour afterwards the fire would occur?—A. The difficulty in my mind with such a solution would be to make it take a longer time than a short time. But I think a man with a little ingenuity could plant a bomb so as to time with considerable accuracy.

Q. They tested various kinds of materials and the time was from twenty to thirty minutes?—A. Yes.

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 72a

Q. The bomb would necessarily have to explode?—A. Not necessarily—just get hot—no doubt you could arrange something to servo that purpose. I think for example I could arrange a solution that would take longer to evaporate than this one, but I have not had time—this one is a well-known solution.

Q. All these solutions would have more or less odour in drying up?—A. They would be apt to.

Q. Do you know of any absolutely odourless? Or would it be possible to have it absolutely odourless?—A. It would be difficult to get one absolutely odourless but it might be possible.

Mr. PRINGLE: I do not know whether in walking through this room I would detect that odour.

Mr. WHITE: I should say that you could, but if concealed in a bomb that might keep the smell in?

The WITNESS: In this particular solution it has to evaporate before anything would happen.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. Are there any other means that could be used for the setting of fire apart from the bomb and a solution of this kind without the actual starting of fire—I mean preparations they could scatter about in the corridors and within a certain period of time cause fire?—A. I do not know anything offhand that could be scattered about—there are a number of organic liquids that do ignite immediately they come in contact with the air but the difficulty with these would be to arrange for them not to be exposed to the air until they are wanted to catch fire.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. I saw a case in the papers saying that some preparation used by housewives to keep down the dust, if it got into a corner it might cause combustion?—A. I do not know about that. I know oily rags are liable to go off spontaneously.

By Mr. Pringle, K.C.:

Q. You heard the evidence this morning of Mr. Ewart, the architect, and you no doubt are familiar with those buildings—would that woodwork there covered with varnish from time to time be very inflammable?—A. I should think quite inflammable.

Q. Take that newspaper room as described, I suppose it would be an easy prey for the flames?—A. I should think so. The newspapers hanging vertically would be apt to burn very rapidly.

Q. More rapidly than laying down?—A. Yes.

By Mr. White, K.C.:

Q. Instantaneously almost?—A. Yes.

Q. From your experiment here it seems to me that when the liquid has been on fire there is a stronger odour than before the fire—now, is there anything you can suggest after hearing the evidence to-day?—A. I think nothing further.

(The investigation was thereupon adjourned until Tuesday, February 15, at 10.30 a.m.)