

OTTAWA FIRE EVIDENCE STILL CONTRADICTORY

(Canadian Press Despatch.)

Ottawa, Feb. 22.—The evidence being given before the Board of Inquiry which is probing the Parliament Buildings fire is still contradictory as to whether there were explosions during the progress of the fire or not. Several witnesses at to-day's sessions thought the explosions were natural occurrences in a blaze of such an extent.

There was a verbal clash between the Ottawa Fire Chief, Mr. Graham, and the Deputy Minister of Public Works, Mr. J. B. Hunter, at the morning session, as to the methods employed in protecting the public buildings.

A protest was made against the practice of allowing alien enemies on parole to report to the Commissioner of Dominion Police in the eastern block and wander at will around that building, which contains the money vaults. There were also protests against the inadequate fire protection in the east block.

Lieut.-Col. Taschereau, Senior Ordnance Officer, at the afternoon session, said he heard four or five different explosions. He had heard a number of shells exploding at Petawawa and the noise was something like that. If shells were placed in the building, the heat, if sufficiently great, would ignite the detonator and cause the shells to explode.

That it would be impossible for the electric wiring to have caused the fire was the opinion of Mr. W. G. Thompson, electrician. Had there been a short circuit all the lights would have gone out at the very first.

W. A. Charlton, M.P., in the morning, told of his escape via the basement from Room 115, when he heard the alarm. From his knowledge of the inflammable nature of the reading-room and adjoining corridors he would have expected the fire to spread as fast as one could run. He had heard no explosions.

M. C. MacCormack, Clerk in the Library, denied that there had been any looting by the 77th Battalion. A large collection of coins was untouched, and if there had been any tendency to pilfer the soldiers could have filled their pockets with them.

E. A. Lesueur, a chemical engineer of twenty-six years' standing, said that a fire such as described by Mayor Martin was not caused in any ordinary manner, but resembled one started with chemicals or an incendiary bomb. He described the action of incendiary chemicals to bear out his opinion. Mr. Frank Glass' description was read to witness. "That sounds like an ordinary fire," he said.