

Excise Act Amendment

I do not know what the legal opinion of the last government was, but I presume it was that it was validly imposed. Certainly I do not think there will be a single member of the house at this date who would be in favour of the government being involved in a lawsuit on this more or less technical point which might result in the return of several millions of dollars to the distillers.

Mr. BENNETT: There can be no real discussion in a court of law as to the amount of a fee in terms of the service and cost, notwithstanding any suggestion of that kind. I remember that when the fee was fixed, the law officers were of the opinion that a fee of twenty cents was the maximum reasonable amount. But to suggest, as has been suggested, that because it does not cost anything like twenty cents to have the certificates prepared and numbered, and a record kept of them, that therefore you should not be able to get the fee, is a wholly erroneous view. It was not that the certificate was important; but it was important to have a record of the price because the validity and the authenticity of the spirits contained in the receptacle that bore the certificate were thereby clearly indicated to everybody. A much larger fee was suggested at first, but twenty cents was agreed upon, and my memory is that the people who were most anxious for it were the exporters themselves, because it gave an added value to their statement that their goods were pure, unadulterated, and just as they had left the bonded warehouses of the country. If there is any question, I think this is a highly desirable piece of legislation.

Section agreed to.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.

SUPPLY BILL

BANK OF CANADA—ALBERTA FINANCIAL SITUATION

Hon. CHARLES A. DUNNING (Minister of Finance) moved the second reading of Bill No. 118, for granting to His Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of the financial year ending March 31, 1938.

Mr. J. H. BLACKMORE (Lethbridge): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the report of the Bank of Canada recommends that money should not be granted to Alberta, as it was granted to Manitoba and Saskatchewan, in my view requires some discussion. Naturally hon. members of the house are not as familiar with the situation which exists and has existed in Alberta as we whose lives have been spent there. We have been impressed with the sympathy and interest which have been shown to us by hon. members since we have come

[Mr. Ilsley.]

here. We appreciate that fact even more when we remember that many of those hon. members can see no sense in what we are trying to do, and that they have to depend entirely on the apparent sincerity with which we speak. We are doubly impressed by the tolerance and evidence of good nature which have been accorded us from all sides. We desire further tolerance and consideration while we discuss this problem which is raised by the report.

As I have stated, we believe there has been grave discrimination against Alberta. Hon. members of the house doubtless do not see eye to eye with us, but we wish to discuss the matter frankly and straightforwardly. First of all, may I say a word or two with respect to the report. I have read it from beginning to end with great care, and have been favourably impressed by many of the statements contained therein. I have noticed that in form it is painstaking and detailed, that it is restrained, that there is nothing harsh or offensive in it. It is kindly worded, and it contains no imputations or insinuations. All these facts we greatly appreciate. It is also accurately and justly weighted. By that I mean that due stress has been placed upon the various aspects which have a bearing upon the situation in Alberta, not only as it affects the dominion but as it affects the people in Alberta who are vitally concerned. It is frank and dignified, and in all these respects it does credit to its authors.

It is marred, however, in that it recommends to the government what we consider a very unjust discrimination against Alberta, namely, that the dominion government do not give Alberta financial assistance between this time and the time of the findings of the proposed commission on taxation.

In the first place, I should like to bring to the attention of the house the financial history of Alberta. This is done very well in the report, but may I review the facts briefly because they have a tremendous bearing upon the situation. A failure to understand those facts might lead hon. members to have less sympathy with the struggles of a people who are trying to be honourable in the eyes of the world. Let me point out that Alberta commenced her history in 1905. Between 1905 and 1922 certain things occurred, the effects of which are still being felt in Alberta. The bank report points this out frankly and stresses it adequately when it says:

The roots of many of Alberta's present problems were developed during this period.

The report characterizes this period as being "extravagant" and as manifesting "poor judg-