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FULL INQUIRY AGAIN REFUSED.

That the Borden government is quite determined to refuse any investigation or inquiry into the doings of the Canadian Shell Committee except the United States contracts specifically referred to the Meredith-Duff Commission, was demonstrated once more in the House of Commons on May 5th. The Conservative majority in the House, obedient to the lead of Sir Robert Borden who spoke at length in refusal of the proposal, voted down a motion by Mr. F. B. Carvell, M.P. for extension of the scope of the Royal Commission.

Mr. Carvell explained that his request had come as the consequence of conditions which had arisen before the Royal Commission as to the right of counsel to pursue examination of witnesses in regard to statements and documents produced in evidence before the Commission by the counsel for the Government, Mr. I. E. Hellmuth, K.C.

Certain statements had been introduced bearing on the relations between the Shell Committee and the Imperial Government. When Mr. E. F. B. Johnston, counsel for the Opposition, endeavored to examine General Bertram regarding the contents of these statements and sought further information regarding vital facts brought to light by the statements, he was stopped by the ruling of the Commissioners that he could not pursue questions which applied to contracts not specifically mentioned as being within the instructions to the Commission. Mr. Johnston found himself in such a position that he was obliged to discontinue his examination of General Bertram.

As pointed out by Mr. Carvell, the result was that one side of the case was being presented to the Commission while those representing the other side were debarred from approaching it in any way. In spite of this argument, Sir Robert Borden took direct stand against Mr. Carvell's request and his refusal was backed by the solid vote of the government majority.

At the same time that he made request for extension of the scope of the Royal Commission, Mr. Carvell suggested to the government that action should be taken which would give the Commission the power to take evidence in the United States and showed that this could be done by Act of Parliament. This was also brushed aside by the government. The result is that the Commission can hear only such United States witnesses as come voluntarily before it and has no power to compel attendance.

FRESH EVIDENCE OF EXTRAVAGANCE.

In reply to questions asked in the House of Commons, the Minister of Customs has given some interesting comparative statistics with respect to 10 of the leading customs ports of Canada: Montreal, Toronto, Quebec, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Victoria, Three Rivers, Sherbrooke, St. John and Halifax. The total revenue collected at these customs ports for the fiscal year 1910-11 aggregated \$50,277,716. For the fiscal year 1914-15 the revenue from the same ports amounted to \$52,546,653. The salaries of the customs officers at these 10 ports rose from \$896,405 in 1911 to \$1,236,978 in 1915, not including the salaries paid to officials on military service overseas. The number of customs officers increased during this period from 937 to 1,160, exclusive of 75 on military service. The comparative figures from Winnipeg, for instance show a falling off in customs revenue between 1911 and 1915 of nearly \$500,000, while the number of customs officials rose from 102 to 129, exclusive of 21 on military service, while the salary cost rose from \$110,050 to \$150,650. The statistics illustrate the tendency to extravagance and over-manning of the working staff which has marked practically all departments of the Government since 1911. The present Government, in place of proceeding to put the Civil Service on a business-like basis, as they pledged themselves to do, have aggravated the condition which was the subject of their criticism when they were in Opposition.

THE COMMANDEERED WHEAT.

When the Borden government on November 27th, 1915, commandeered some 15,000,000 bushels of wheat in terminal elevators in Canada, the reason given for this action was the "urgency" of the needs of the Allies for supplies. On April 29th it was shown in the House of Commons that the last of this wheat was not actually being shipped to Europe until some time this month. So much for the "urgency" which prompted the drastic action of the Government. Several Western members of Parliament have shown that the grain market throughout Canada was unnecessarily disturbed and that losses aggregating hundreds of thousands of dollars were sustained by private interests.

In the March number of the Liberal Monthly, at Page 79, in an article on Hay Contracts in New Brunswick, a printer's error in figures in the second paragraph confused the meaning of the statement made. As will readily be seen from the sub-heading over the paragraph and from the context to the erroneous figures, the intention was to show that three contracts at \$21.50 a ton had been let by the Department of Agriculture to men who were not bona fide hay dealers and that these contractors then turned around and sub-let the contracts to regular hay dealers at \$20.50 a ton, the middlemen thus securing for themselves a "rake-off" of \$1 a ton without actually buying or handling the hay themselves. The printer's error made it appear that these three contracts were given by the Department of Agriculture at \$21.00, which was of course incorrect. The contract price was \$21.50.