

Government Under Fire.

Railway Bill Subjected to Close Criticism--Opposition Members Turn on Searchlight.

HE DID SEND DR. GRENFEILL
When the House opened yesterday at 3:15 p.m.

Sir Michael Cashin asked why the Civil Servants had not received their pay. He also brought up the matter of the pit props cut at the Government's expense last year. He wanted to know why they had not been sold as he understood that the firm of Munn in New York had made an offer which although still open, would not be so much longer. The value of these pit props was \$180,000.

The Prime Minister said that Mr. F. Higgins, acting for Messrs. Munn, had offered \$12 per cord which had been accepted by Council. After the acceptance Higgins had brought the price down to \$11.

Sir Michael Cashin suggested that the Government get busy on the matter.

Mr. Sullivan brought up the matter of outstanding claims and was told by the Prime Minister that certain points had to be determined before payment could be made in some cases.

During question time Sir Michael Cashin was informed by the Prime Minister that Sir Edgar Bowring had telegraphed that he could not stay longer than a week at Washington. It was not the intention of the Government to send Mr. Collishaw to Washington to replace Sir Edgar.

With reference to the question concerning Dr. Grenfell, Sir Michael Cashin challenged the statement that it was not correct that a written report had been sent to Mr. Coaker by Dr. Grenfell and he could prove it.

Mr. Coaker—"It is not correct."

Mr. Higgins said that he knew Sir Michael Cashin could prove his statement for he, too, had seen the report which began "According to your instructions I visited Washington" and concluded by reminding the Minister that the writer's expenses had been heavy. Dr. Grenfell might not have sent the report to Mr. Coaker in his official capacity, but he had sent it none the less. Mr. Higgins then brought off a splendid cross examination of Mr. Coaker which gave him the desired answer.

Mr. Higgins—"Did you send Dr. Grenfell in your private capacity as W. F. Coaker?"

No answer.

Mr. Higgins—"Did you not meet Grenfell before he went?"

Mr. Coaker—"No."

Mr. Higgins—"If you did not tell Dr. Grenfell to go to Washington did you write him?"

Mr. Coaker—"No."

Mr. Higgins—"Did you tell someone else to write Grenfell and tell him to go?"

Mr. Coaker—(haltingly)—"Yes."

Mr. Higgins also elicited the fact that Dr. Grenfell had reported in a private letter.

The Legislative Council's amendment to the Road Act caused some discussion, the Council having exceeded their rights in making an amendment to this Bill.

The House went into Committee of the Whole on the Railway Resolutions.

EXCESSIVE EXPENDITURE ON COAL.

The Prime Minister gave certain information asked for by the Opposition. Last year's pay roll had been greatly augmented owing to the scarcity of labour at the time and 5000 tons more of coal had been used and this had cost more than during the previous year. He had authorized Sir George Bury to select a general manager for the railway in Montreal. Sir George Bury had telegraphed that he had the right man. No salary had been specified when Bury was given the authority to engage a man.

Mr. Sullivan thought there was something strange about the coal. Allowing \$15 per ton, the extra 5000 tons cost \$75,000. The coal bill of 1920-21 exceeded that of 1919-20 by \$168,000. Deducting this \$75,000 from the \$168,000, the large sum of \$93,000 was still left unaccounted for. He thought the amount expended on coal was excessive. He saw that no reliance could be placed on the figures submitted in connection with the Railway. As regards the general manager he did not think the man required could be picked up at a day's notice and that furthermore a good man would not come for a year. He was informed by the Prime Minister that the General Manager would come here on a five year contract, whom Bury would get.

Mr. Sullivan was afraid time would tell, and we would find we had drawn another lemon.

Sir Michael Cashin continued his speech from the previous day. He first dealt with an article which appeared in yesterday's Advocate and in which he and other Opposition members had been criticized whilst the Telegram had also come in for its share of Advocate comment.

THE ADVOCATE CASTIGATED.

The article had termed Wednesday's proceedings at the House an "Opposition flare-up" and called it a "fizzle." Such an article was an imposition on the public as the Minister of Marine

and Fisheries, whose official organ the Advocate was, well knew. He had told the people where the Government were leading the country. They could not fight. They were gone. He again reminded the Prime Minister of his denunciation of the Reid's last year and yet, he was now asking for \$1,500,000 to give to the men he had saved alive. Some whippersnapper belonging to Mr. Coaker had had the cheek to write such trash for a supposedly intelligent people. How could the Government "smash" them? They had no energy, no spirit. They were just shipped men earning salaries by sitting like mummies in the House. What had the Government done in connection with the Bell Island Ore Tax promised so long ago. For four months nearly, this matter had been neglected. And if anyone brought matters of this sort to the notice of the public, he had to put up with a screech such as the article in question. Men in this country had lost their ears for writing stuff less dirty than that article. Coaker had destroyed the country and now, in his last agonies, the best thing he could do would be to bury the Advocate. No one had looked forward to Confederation with Canada until Coaker had put it on the horizon. Coaker had put the Colony in a position it would find it hard to get out of, without going into Confederation. If the Government had any proposition whereby they might save the country, why did they not tell it. What had any of them in their heads to hand out. The Government was in despair. They were going on and had not courage or manliness enough to tell the country what policy they had. If they went to the country with their railway policy they would not get a vote.

AN INCOMPETENT GOVERNMENT.

The article had been supervised by either Mr. Hibbs or Mr. Coaker that morning. Did the person who wrote that article know that the week before last our revenue dropped \$70,000 and that this week \$100,000 was yet required to bring the revenue to the same as that for the corresponding week last year. The Government were legalized robbers of the worst kind and they could not deny it. Mr. Halfyard had only moved in the matter of the Cable Companies Tax after he (Sir Michael) had brought it up in the House. If the Government were running the railway as a private concern would they keep on running it at a loss on borrowed money? That was precisely what they were doing. Why should they now come and ask for that \$1,500,000. It was not the Government, but the people, who owned the Railway. If they honestly believed they were doing right they should go to the country. Existing conditions had been brought about by Coaker and a Prime Minister lacking backbone. They would go on with the public funds of the Colony until the money was gone and then they would resign. In a private conversation he had had with Mr. Coaker, the latter had talked like a man who realized that the whole thing was gone. Mr. Coaker did not know until he heard it in the House, that \$5,000,000 had been drawn by the people from the Savings Banks in 1919. He (Mr. Coaker) would find that another \$5,000,000 had been drawn this year. Next year would find between \$10,000,000 and

\$15,000,000 gone from the reserve funds in the Banks. Did the men who wrote that Advocate article know that schooners were now up North with fish for which they could not get \$4.00 per quintal. Sir Michael wanted to know why the Telegram should have been labelled at it had been. It was merely a reason to deceive on the part of the Advocate. He next read Sir George Bury's report and said that as much value would be got from that as from the report of the auditors who came down last year. Sir Michael sharply criticised the Report and when he had finished reading he asked the Chairman of the Commission if that was all the report this gentleman had made.

Mr. Coaker—"All I saw."

Sir Michael—"Is it worth the \$10,000 you paid for it?"

Mr. Coaker—"I suppose so."

Sir Michael—"Is it not a report between the devil and the deep sea. If says, if the Reids can't run the railroad the Government must. You are taking it on yourselves on the recommendation of Sir George Bury to import a man to manage this railroad. I am convinced that before he is here six months you will want to get clear of him. I am sorry the Prime Minister is not here. Hon. Mr. Coaker, be sure, is in his seat, but he is in a comatose state, different a great deal from his actions a short while ago when he could not be held down, and could seldom resist hurling ink bottles and other objects that were near him. Yesterday I asked about the interest on the \$14 million but the answer I received left little doubt that neither the million and a half nor the interest have been charged against the Reids. I call the Prime Minister's agreement a swindle."

In answer to a question asked the Chairman of the Railway Commission, Mr. Warren informed Sir Michael that the million and a half of last year was to be charged up against capital account.

Sir Michael—"What capital account? Have you a new one?"

Mr. Warren—"I do not know."

Sir Michael—"Where are the Reids going to get money 30 years hence when they are insolvent to-day? What is the sense of charging the amount up to them. Is it decency?"

Mr. Warren—"Oh, no, it is charged against any claim they may have."

Sir Michael—"What claim will they have?"

Mr. Warren—"They may have a claim."

Sir Michael—"Is there anything on the railroad now to cover the nine million dollars?"

Mr. Warren—"The answer is clear that the Reids will have a claim."

Sir Michael—"Is a claim made 30 years hence enough to cover 9 million dollars?"

Mr. Warren—"I do not know. They may claim for improvements."

Sir Michael—"According to these resolutions the improvements were made out of the country's money."

Sir Michael next asked Mr. Warren and Mr. Coaker if either of them could explain the agreement. He charged that they were not able to make any explanation. He invited the visitors to look at the redeemer of their country who to-day could not give a word of explanation on the railway resolutions.

Mr. Warren, in explanation said that the amount will be charged up against any claims that the Reid Co. may have as set out in Section 12 of the 1901 contract. "I have heard," said he, "unofficially, that the Reids now have a three million dollar claim against this country."

Sir Michael—"Is that your best explanation? Why do you insinuate in the contract that the Reid Co. will have a claim. You are deceiving the public."

Sir Michael next challenged the Prime Minister to make satisfactory explanation of paragraph 3 of the contract.

The Prime Minister explained the difference between operating expenses and capital account expenses.

Sir Michael—"Are the six new engines charged to capital account, or under operating expenses?"

Prime Minister—"The Reids should have supplied them under their contract."

Sir Michael—"And they are charged to operating expenses; where will we end? Can you not give us any explanation? Will the Prime Minister redraft this paragraph 3 or will he whip his voting machines in line and make them pass it even though they know the injustice of it?" Sir Michael, before he closed his speech promised to have something further to say, subsequently.

Sir John Crosbie, before adjournment, took occasion to give his mind free play on a scurrilous article in yesterday's Advocate, and he unmercifully scored the writer.

Hon. Mr. Coaker, thinking he was blamed, asked Sir John did he accuse him.

Sir John said he did not think so, but all the same the paper was his official organ and he was responsible. Referring to other articles in that paper Sir John asked Mr. Coaker if only one year ago he stated that he would make the Bell Island people pay a tax of \$1.00 per ton on ore. Do you forget it?

Mr. Coaker—"I only recommended it."

Sir John then charged that in the Bell Island agreement Mr. Coaker had no say. That it was fixed up by

Messrs. Reid, Collishaw and Wolvin at a private residence. He believed that Hon. Mr. Coaker and the Government had been bought lock, stock and barrel, and seeing the mess they had made, they had asked the Opposition to help them out. The Hon. Minister has told this House that he is "a physical wreck from over work and worry."

Mr. Coaker—"I sleep well."

Sir John—"You should get up earlier then and work hard to untangle the mess you have made."

Mr. Coaker—"At Port Union I do."

Sir John—"It is a pity you did not stay at Port Union."

The committee rose at 6:30. (Continued on page 10.)

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