

Trade Relations with Russia

Hon. R. J. MANION (Minister of Railways and Canals): The only thing I can say at the moment is that the four western provinces have agreed to the proposal and that arrangements are being made to deal with the question.

TRADE RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

On the orders of the day:

Mr. H. E. SPENCER (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask a question of the government based upon the following Canadian Press dispatch:

Bona fides satisfactory to the federal government have been established and the syndicate is now prepared to conduct the trade without financial guarantee from the Canadian government, according to a telegram from G. G. Serkau, syndicate head, read at a convention of the Western Live Stock Union at Calgary.

Is the government prepared to give an assurance that there will be no variation detrimental to soviet products made in the customs regulations during the life of this proposed agreement?

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, that any hon. member of this house should ask such a question is amazing. It is part of the constitutional practice of this parliament, and all other parliaments as well, that no government shall give any assurance with respect to customs matters to any person or persons, corporation or corporations. I recall an incident which was recited to me in my early days by an old member of the House of Commons. He asked the Minister of Finance of that day whether or not a certain change in tariff would take place and the minister replied: If I answered that question I would consider that I was unfit for this position, or words to that effect. No assurance can be given by any government to any person at any time as to how the administration of the country's affairs will be carried on in a given contingency which may or may not arise. The hon. gentleman who asked this question, undoubtedly with the best of motives, knows perfectly well, or at least he should know, that if I were to undertake to give an answer to such a question I would be derelict in my office and violating the duties of my position.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS

REPORTED PURCHASE OF RAILWAY DOCK AT VANCOUVER

On the orders of the day:

Mr. WILFRED HANBURY (Vancouver-Burrard): Mr. Speaker, I should like to inquire of the Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Reid.)

(Mr. Manion) if he has any information to give to the house in connection with the proposed purchase or negotiation for purchase of the Canadian National Railways dock at Vancouver?

Hon. R. J. MANION (Minister of Railways and Canals): No, there is nothing to give to the house. The harbour commission of Vancouver is in touch with the whole situation and there have been consultations between them and the Canadian National Railways. Of course, this is a matter which will be dealt with by the railway officials and not by the government.

PREMIUM ON GOLD

On the orders of the day:

Mr. OLOF HANSON (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the government if it intends to continue during 1933 the payment of a premium to the gold producers of Canada.

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): The price paid for gold is the price which the producers can obtain elsewhere, and that is all. I assume the hon. gentleman thinks that because his products are being sold at a lesser price than they can be sold at elsewhere, a lesser price should be paid to the gold producers than they can obtain elsewhere. The government has commandeered gold in the sense that it cannot be exported without a licence and it is purchased at the price which the producer could obtain for his product in other markets.

Mr. HANSON (Skeena): Is the government going to continue that policy?

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): I could not answer as to what may arise in the future. I have already indicated to the hon. gentleman that no government can say what is going to happen under present conditions in particular, but the government at present is purchasing gold on the basis I have mentioned and so far has no reason for believing it will change the price that has been paid.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT

The house resumed, from February 21, consideration of the motion of Mr. Woodsworth for the second reading of Bill No. 24, to amend the criminal code (unlawful associations), and the proposed amendment thereto of Mr. Guthrie.

Mr. ARMAND R. LAVERGNE (Montmagny): Mr. Speaker, I feel I must ask the indulgence of the house in speaking on this