

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

TUESDAY, March 13, 1906.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at Three o'clock.

REMOVAL OF METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVATORY.

On the Orders of the Day being called :

Mr. A. E. KEMP. Mr. Speaker, I would like to inquire from the government if the rumour, which is current, respecting the removal of the observatory from Toronto is correct?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. The matter is under consideration.

SUPPLY—INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister) moved that the House go into Committee of Supply.

Hon. H. R. EMMERSON (Minister of Railways and Canals). Mr. Speaker, before you leave the chair, it is my—

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Mr. Speaker, before the hon. gentleman (Mr. Emmerson) goes on, I would like to say that, of course, there is no objection to his making a statement just now, although it is rather unusual to do so without more notice and I believe it is not usual to do so until an opportunity has been given to examine the report. My hon. friend from Lanark (Mr. Haggart) tells me that he endeavoured this morning to secure a copy of the report from the Minister of Railways and Canals and was unable to do so. It might perhaps facilitate business to some extent to have the hon. gentleman go on and make his statement now, but it is perfectly obvious not only to the Prime Minister, but to the Minister of Railways and Canals himself that under these circumstances it is impossible to have the usual discussion because that involves some consideration at least of the report of the minister.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that it is rather an unusual proceeding to rush into business immediately upon the meeting of parliament as we are doing at this moment. It will be for my hon. friends opposite to decide what course they should follow. Of course, if they are not ready for discussion we shall leave it until another sitting.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not think there is any objection from this side of the House to the hon. minister going on and making his statement at once. I merely desire to point out to my right hon. friend that under the circumstances it would, of course, be absolutely impossible to expect that criticism, which, no doubt, will be made a little later on upon the statement and upon the report.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I suppose it will come some other day.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I do not know whether my right hon. friend will object to its being postponed for a day or two but for fear that he may, I thought I would mention it. It may be impossible to make the criticism at once.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Hear, hear.

Mr. EMMERSON. Mr. Speaker, it is my intention and certainly my desire to as briefly as I may, and as concisely as I can, give an explanation with respect to the Intercolonial Railway, and incidentally in connection with other branches of the Department of Railways and Canals. It would be natural to expect that I would claim considerable time of the House in making that explanation, in view of the fact that the Intercolonial Railway and its conditions, have been subjected to a great deal of comment and discussion during the recess. It will be borne in mind that at the last session of this parliament it was my duty, and privilege as well, to explain as best I could with respect to the operations of the railway during the fiscal year 1904-5, and also, in part, to make some explanation with respect to the operations of the railway during the then current fiscal year; that is the fiscal year ending on June 30, 1905. I, in part, discussed the reasons which led to a deficit occurring during that year, and before I sit down it will be my effort to explain more fully with respect to that deficit, and with respect to the transactions for the whole year. I had only dealt with the transactions during a portion of the year. It will be seen by the report which I had the honour of laying on the table last evening that the total mileage of railways in Canada up to June 30 last, was 20,601 miles, an increase of 990 miles during the year. In addition to this there were 3,632 miles of sidings. As indicating another phase of transportation development, it may be pointed out that there were 793 miles of electric railway in operation on June 30, 1905. I presume, Sir, that it will be my privilege and certainly it would not be considered amiss by hon. members of this House, if I were to deal at some length with the report as a whole and if I were to invite the attention of hon. members to the information contained therein. However, the task of dealing with the Intercolonial Railway is one that may perhaps command my whole time, and I fear that I would run the risk of trespassing on the indulgence and kindness of the House if I were to attempt to deal with it in any way beyond presenting the mere skeleton of a statement. The subject itself might fairly well excuse elaboration; the statements which I shall present to this House, Sir, might fairly be referred to; they might fairly be discussed and they might very fairly be padded. But