

SIGNAL DUES AT HALIFAX BILL.
IN COMMITTEE.

The House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole on Bill (152) An Act respecting Signal Dues at Halifax.

(In the Committee.)

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—The earliest legislation on the subject was in 1859, when what were known as colonial dues of five shillings were imposed on every vessel apparently without regard to size. Subsequently, an Act was passed changing that to a higher duty. From time to time legislation took place. As far back as chapter 64 of the Act of 1859, a resolution was passed by the Halifax Board of Trade asking the government to exempt vessels of 150 tons and under. Nothing seems to have been done with that, although representations and reports have been made from time to time.

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—By whom are those dues now collected ?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—By this government. A great deal of correspondence has taken place as to the necessity of keeping up the station. It is a point known as Citadel Hill. One hon. gentleman in the discussion on the second reading of this Bill, expressed the opinion that the charge ought to be removed altogether. I have here a letter dated March 2, 1908, which gives the reasons for keeping it up. The writer says :

As to the service rendered I beg to state that Military Outlook at Citadel Hill has for over a century kept watch for vessels entering this harbour, and in conjunction with the outlook party at Camperdown near the mouth of the harbour, has kept record of vessels passing Halifax going east or west. In the day time certain flags or balls give notice to the merchants and citizens of vessels off the harbour, and when vessels were entering, the house flag of the ship was displayed and the owners made ready to receive them. Since telephoning superseded flags and lights the work is now done more easily, but as large ships come, especially mail boats, many other people than the owners or agents desire to know. Customs officers, post office officials, cabmen, wharf employes, port physicians and immigration and railway people are able to attend to their duties till ship arrives, and are not required to hang around the landing pier for hours awaiting an unreported vessel. This notifying does not apply to schooners or even sailing vessels. Really no services are rendered for the last-named vessels. The complaint

Hon. Mr. WILSON.

is on behalf of these from the Halifax Board of Trade. The tax on big ships and ocean passenger boats is not objected to, those connected with them getting the benefits and appreciating them.

If the whole tax were abolished the signal station at Citadel could be dispensed with and the pay of the staff of signalmen would be saved to the department. The signal staff at Camperdown could also be dispensed with, and the Marconi wireless station just beside Camperdown could wire to the Central telephone station in this city. The circumstances are as above stated. The age of the signal station, since 1749, and the benefit to people who have business with the mail boats would justify the retention of the signal tax on big ships, and the signal officers at Citadel and Camperdown.

Hon. Mr. SULLIVAN, from the committee, reported the Bill without amendment.

MEAFORD HARBOUR BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

The House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole on Bill (158) An Act respecting Meaford Harbour.

(In the Committee.)

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—The year before confederation, the parliament of the old province of Canada made an appropriation for a harbour in what was then known as the township of St. Vincent. It was before the town of Meaford was established. The money having been expended, necessarily made it in those days a public harbour. When Meaford grew up, the people of the town naturally took charge of the harbour and nobody seems to have interfered with them. They have spent a good deal of money on it, and the object of this Bill is to transfer to the municipality any right the government may have in the harbour.

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—Does the government get any revenue out of this harbour ?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—They impose tolls.

Hon. Mr. LOUGHEED—Does the revenue cover the expenditure ?

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—I think so.

Hon. Sir MACKENZIE BOWELL—There are many of those harbours in the west where they have power to impose tolls, but they are under local control exclusively.