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STEER BROTHERS.

Important Session at the House.

Sir John Crosbie Produces Some Startling Evidence-- Fish and Salt Purchase Scandals Discussed.

There were some startling occurrences at yesterday's session of the House which was one of the most important sittings held during the term. Some sensational charges were made by Sir John Crosbie in connection with fish and salt purchases which were substantiated by documentary and other evidence.

The House met at 3.15 p.m. Sir Michael Cashin gave notice of the following Motion:

"That he would at to-day's session move that an address of this House be presented to His Excellency the Governor in Council, praying that he will be pleased to appoint the three Judges of the Supreme Court a commission under the provisions of Chapter 21, Consolidated Statutes, (1918), entitled "Of enquiries concerning Public Matters," to enquire and report, concerning the appropriation and expenditure of public money, in 1920, for fish and salt, and particularly into the purchase, shipment and disposition of the cargo of the "President Coaker" and all matters relating thereto, and into the purchase, sale, custody and control of the salt cargo stored at Port Union; and praying that until the said Commission shall report, the Hon. W. F. Coaker, who holds the dual and irreconcilable positions of representative of both buyer and seller in

these transactions, shall be suspended from his office as Minister of Marine and Fisheries, in which he controls the evidence and sources of information essential to the protection of the interests of the Colony."

Notices of question were given by Sir Michael Cashin, Messrs. Moore and Sullivan.

The questions on the Order Paper were discussed at some length. Sir Michael Cashin impressing on the Government the need for collecting the money due from the Commercial Cable Company. It was the Opposition's duty to see it was done.

With reference to the question as to whether local coopers were suffering from the Fish Regulations Mr. Bennett expressed his surprise that the Prime Minister should answer it in the negative and said it was plainly evident that the Government was responsible for work being taken away from them. The Prime Minister told Mr. Bennett that the travelling expenses of Mr. Penney in Norway were \$2500. He received no compensation. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries was the Minister of the Crown who instructed the Deputy Minister of Finance to draw the cheque in payment for the Tuckahoe's salt cargo. It was decided to purchase this salt on Government accounts, the matter being left in the hands of the Minister of Marine and

Fisheries. About 4000 tons were left at Port Union.

The House went into Committee of the Whole on the Bill to Repeal the Codfish Exportation Act. Sir John Crosbie continued his speech of the previous day. He first said that the Royal Stores Woolen Mills had received orders from the Public Works Department to the value of \$10,000. He thought Mr. Salter's salary should be discontinued and the job given to someone else. He told the Minister of Public Works that he could not explain the matter satisfactorily.

Minister of Public Works. "You don't know it all."

Sir John Crosbie. "No, there's a lot more that I haven't been told." Continuing, he referred to the "President Coaker's" cargo. He was prepared to tell the story of that cargo now. He read the reply to Sir Michael Cashin's question of April 4th and said he would explain it later. The cargo of the "President Coaker" was not mentioned amongst the names of the firms who received the Government guarantee.

The first bought by Mr. Sellars was paid for at a higher rate than that bought by Barr's and Job's, choice Labrador fetching \$9.00 and other kinds proportionately lower. The firms who bought this fish on Government account were being paid for storage and labour and he knew that some of the men who sold the fish had stored it themselves. He charged that there was a deliberate attempt to deceive the House in connection with the "President Coaker's" cargo. Capt. Kean had told him that Mr. Sellars said he had had nothing to do with the "President Coaker's" cargo although it was in the statement of the fish bought by him. The cargo must therefore have been manipulated for Mr. Coaker's own ends. Those were the facts. Not only for but her cargo and expenses paid for but her freight was paid in full before her cargo was delivered to market. These were facts which could not be denied and yet they could not get an enquiry into the matter. Only half freight was paid

on the "Jean Wakely" but full freight on the "President Coaker". Sir John had asked Mr. Coaker to explain the matter and he had refused to do it. Mr. Sellars's statement was not in detail like those of Messrs. Barr and Job. It was an attempt to pull the wool over our eyes. He could not see how Mr. Coaker could wiggle out of this. The transaction in itself immediately casts suspicion all around. Something would have to be done to straighten it out. He had made it clear that Mr. Sellars had had nothing to do with the "President Coaker's" cargo although the Minister of Marine and Fisheries had said he had. Sir John regretted the position the Minister had taken. He thought the whole affair absolutely wrong and indecent. \$8.50 was supposed to cover cost and expenses per qt. for choice Labrador, but Mr. Sellars got \$9.00. Was the \$9.00 fish shipped in the "Jean Wakely" or the "President Coaker"?

Minister of Marine and Fisheries. "It went in the Wakely."

Sir John Crosbie wanted to know by what right Sellars should get more for his fish. He was going to leave this case rest on its merits as there was a Motion before the House but he said it was plain there was some intention to hide something in connection with this cargo from the public. He appealed to Mr. Coaker to have the matter investigated and cleared up. He next referred to the sufferings of the coopers in St. John's West. Did the Premier know that coopeage products were unobtainable in St. John's West to-day. He told the Premier if he wanted to employ a good liar he would take him, in response to a comment thrown across the floor of the House. The Fish Regulations was the cause of half the St. John's coopers walking the streets to-day. Drums were now fetching 50 cents which formerly sold for \$1.10. If the Advisory Board had not been so greedy for profit these thousands of qts. of fish now in the country would have been sold and would be in our foreign markets in local casks. The Fish Regulations were the sole cause of

the prevailing distress amongst coopers. The Premier had cast a reflection on his word but there were men who would take his (Sir John's) word before the Premier's signature. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries had as much to do with keeping up the price of fish as he had. It was supply and demand that had done it. Mr. Coaker could not raise the price of seals this spring. He wasn't even able to make the St. John's firms pay the same that was paid in Harbor Grace. The Minister was only human and could not do the impossible. What greater incompetency could be displayed than the action of the Government in purchasing five steamers and spending \$500,000 of the Colony's money without thinking about where it would come from. The country would lose \$400,000 on the transaction. Even the Lobelia must have cost nearly \$80,000 and she now stood a standing disgrace. He asked that she be taken down and put in Port Union. He would take her down free if Mr. Coaker would anchor her. Referring to the Railway Sir John said it was a hopeless proposition and the Government did not know what to do with it. He wanted to know why the Fortia and Prospero were included in the list of ships run by the Railway Commission, which list was contained in the circular mentioned on the previous day. (None of the Ministers, however, seemed to know anything about it.) Would anyone seriously tell him, said Sir John, that the railway was any credit to the Government of the country. The losses on its operation were so serious that if there were nothing else, it would bring about financial collapse to the colony, and the Government took over the Railway because it was defunct. It was a pity that it did not go into the hands of a Receiver. The cost would be between \$2,500,000 and \$3,000,000. No attempt to tell the Government's position in connection with the Railway had yet been made. Sir John thought that Reid's would not take it back. He thought moreover arbitration would be necessary through the Govern-

ment's taking over something they did not understand. Did they know an expert was in the country to-day looking over the Railway how we would later learn to our cost. Matter of raising a loan for the City Council came up a few days ago and the Premier said the Royal Bank of Canada were shylocks and he would get the money elsewhere. But, the Royal Bank had advanced the loan on their own terms. The only conclusion he could come to was that no one else would advance it and the Premier had to go to the shylocks. This condition was brought about by squandering money. It was a nice state of affairs after eighteen months. The time had come when something must be done quickly to change conditions here or very few would be left to carry on business in the country. If the Government had shown any foresight the position would not now be so bad. Each week the loss on revenue was astounding. It would run into three millions of dollars whilst the estimated expenditure would be increased \$1,000,000. \$2,500,000 was lost on the railway and \$2,000,000 on sugar, salt, fish and other things. He was told that more men were being paid off at Bell Island. How serious that was, few realized. Bell Island was the life of the Conception Bay labourer. He believed the Premier had tried to save the position and he asked what results had been obtained.

The Prime Minister said it depends on whether the Companies can dispose of the ore on hand.

Sir John Crosbie said he had heard that. He was told by the Premier that certain propositions had been made to Mr. Wolvin with reference to the matter and that it had also been considered by the Government.

The Premier here gave a lengthy explanation of what had been done in the matter.

reference in him to believe his statements. If something were not done quickly to alleviate conditions he greatly feared the consequences.

The Prime Minister referred to some portions of Sir John Crosbie's speech. He asked the House to deal leniently with that part of the estimates dealing with Road Grants.

The Minister of Marine and Fisheries replied to Sir John Crosbie with reference to the "President Coaker." He said that the facts presented by the Fisheries Department were correct.

Sir John Crosbie asked a question concerning Mr. Sellars, but the Minister of Fisheries refused to answer and continued his address, reiterating his former statements. He then went on to make a lengthy explanation of the matter. He offered Mr. Higgins the full freedom of the fisheries department to investigate the matter.

Sir John Crosbie replied to Hon. Mr. Coaker. He regretted that he should make such a statement and expect it to be taken seriously. The Minister placed himself in an awkward position by not letting the motion, turned down on Tuesday, go through. If he were satisfied for Mr. Higgins to investigate, why not let the public do so. He refuted Mr. Coaker's statements by reference to the official documents. These documents showed that the "President Coaker" was paid freight before leaving here. The information Sir John had used was reliable even if it were second hand. Sir John then crossed the floor of the House and showed the documents to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, who admitted they were the official ones.

Sir John then said, why not have Mr. Sellars examined on oath before a Select Committee. He charged that Joseph Sellars never received the cheque for the fish and never had anything to do with the "President Coaker's" cargo.

The Minister of Marine and Fisheries. "It is not true."

Sir John Crosbie said his one course (Continued on 5th page)

Mustad's Hooks.



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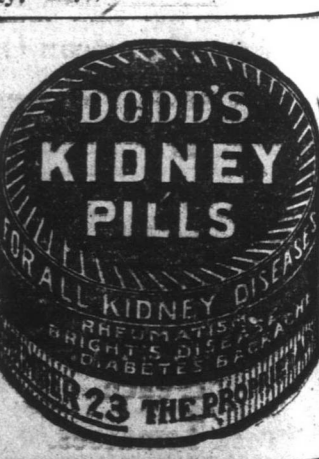
Ask for Mustad's.

april 25, m. th. tey

Died of Heart Failure.

The Furness Withy Co. received a message last evening from the Captain of the S.S. Schem, saying that the Chief Cook, Mr. Read, had died suddenly of heart failure. The Company was asked to make arrangements for burial when the ship arrives in port at 8 p.m. this evening.

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COLORS--Light Gray, Blue Gray, Outside White, Inside White, Red, Sky Blue, Azure Blue, Medium Buff, Pea Green, Kitchen Green, Light Brown, Golden-Brown

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