

AT THE HOUSE.

All the Amendments Submitted by Opposition re the Humber Accepted—First Division Takes Place in Railway Resolutions—A Large Number of Visitors Attend Sitzings.

House met at 3.15 p.m.

Petition from W. J. Walsh for a Ferry at Smith Sound, P.B. was supported by Messrs. Sullivan and Sinnott.

Petition from W. J. Higgins on behalf of the residents of Flat Rock was supported by Messrs. Fox and Wincombe.

Sir M. P. Cashin spoke on the great need of Telegraph or Telephone communication at St. John's, which section is termed the "graveyard of Newfoundland," also the necessity of a similar office at Peter's River.

Messrs. Walsh and Sullivan endorsed the views of the first speaker. The nearest telegraph office is 18 miles away and in view of the wrecks which occurred there particularly during the past month, it was important that offices be opened there.

The House then went into Committee on the Products Corporation Bill.

The Bill was put through with the unanimous consent of the entire assembly. All the amendments offered by the Opposition were accepted and the Humber Agreement now is considerably more advantageous to the Colony than it was when first presented to the House.

The Committee of the Whole then discussed the Railway Resolutions.

Sir M. P. Cashin—There is little left for me to say in reference to the Resolution before the chair. The Government promised great reforms in the Railway in 1919. It was to be remodelled and put in first-class condition and made a paying concern. In view of all these promises see where you are landed to-day. Perhaps some of the gentlemen were honest in their intentions. The Premier gave us a long history of Railways in Newfoundland a few days ago but it all had to end up with the fact that we had a railway on our hands and we knew not what to do with it. One of the chief planks in the manifesto of the Premier in 1919, was "Railway Reform," (quotes from Squire's Manifesto of 1919 on promises to reform railway service.) Not a single detail of these promises was performed. Two writers of these promises did not believe they would be kept. He knew that they would deceive the people thought and that was enough. His cry was "the Reids are making big profits and their returns were cooked and not to be believed. The Government took charge of the Railway in 1920 and the first thing they did was to carry it on. The then Minister of Marine and Fisheries, Mr. Coaker, was Chairman of the Commission. He is in the House now as Sir W. F. Coaker, and I would like to hear from him on this subject. The Premier, I notice, has cleared out of the House. He would not tell us in his speech a few weeks ago the name of the man who introduced the 1898 contract. He knew as well as we all do that it was the late Sir James Winter, father of the speaker. I mention this to show you the deception of the man. Sir William Coaker ran the Railway with full control for a year and I hope he will tell us about it and admit that he sunk a million and a half the same Railway that was used as an election bait in 1919 and in the operation of which the public were told the Reids were making big dividends which were hidden in their returns. No one has yet told the true story of the Reids. Sir W. F. Coaker knows it, why does he not relate it? The late Sir R. G. Reid, who knew railways and how to run them, but he lost money right along. In 1919 they fell down and were losing so heavily that they could go on no longer, and now we find that we have to pay them two million dollars. No wonder we were advised by leading English counsel to settle with the Reids as gracefully as possible, and avoid litigation. We were led to infer from the Premier's 1923 Manifesto that wealthy British capitalists would take over the Railway and run it, the inference plainly indicating the Harmsworth Co. and the Armstrong-Whitworth Co. This was a delusion to get the people's votes, for we find now that the Government is going to run it. He kept the House closed so that the people would have no chance of learning the truth till after the election. The Government went out to a starving people and fooled all who hoped for work with cry of the "Humber." They sacrificed the fisheries and now where is this once great industry is to-day. There is not more than a score or so of hankers out as against 300 a few years ago. The fishermen have deserted the fisheries and some are gone to the States and Canada, a few to the Humber, and more still standing idle looking for work. The fishery is gone. There is plenty of fish striking in but there are few to catch it and on the south coast and in Placentia Bay

there is no salt. The country was never in such straits as she is to-day. Messrs. Downey and Grimes believe in the Government running the Railway. Are they hoping to be on the Commission? The road will have to be built from end to end. The Government went back on every promise. There is no defence. The only defence will be in abuse and vilification in the Mail and the Advocate by half-lunatic scribblers to-morrow, you will wake up one of these days and find yourselves in a Crown Colony or under Confederation. The Humber Deal is all right to a certain extent, but there will be no bank deposit books required by the laborers. Is there not one man on the other side of the House who will rise up and tell us how they can hope to operate this Railway? Will not the late Minister of Marine and Fisheries, Sir William Coaker, do so? It is only wasting time for us to be talking longer on the subject. How are you going to raise the Railway money? You have a Railway deficit already of 5 millions. Your railway is gone, your fishing is gone, and you certainly have "put Reid in his place. He put it all over you and got whatever is any good. He has his lands, his water power, his electric light, and street car service while you are left with a rotten railway. His Electric Light service earns \$4,000 a year. You had no backbone to fight Reid, you now can't say who is going to run the Railway. No country has ever made railways pay under government control. It is no use for us to waste time talking. These resolutions we know will go through with blind and deaf majority. Again I ask is there no man on the government side who will rise and give us some hope for a way out of the position we are in to-night. The Prime Minister stays out of the House all the evening, Sir William Coaker could tell us something, and I ask him to do so. He is earnest and means well, even if he makes mistakes I shall not vote for these resolutions. I would rather see the Railway closed down and do without it as our fathers did. Now tell us something about it, Mr. Minister of Justice or Sir William Coaker.

COAKER SAID HE WAS OPPOSED TO GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

Sir W. F. Coaker in reply to some statements of the previous speaker said he was opposed to joint control of the Railway and that is why the commission of which he was the Chairman, was discontinued. He was opposed to Government control of the Railway and no such proposition would get his support. He hoped the Government would have an arrangement concluded by September as to the future operation of the system.

Mr. Fox recognized the futility of persuading the Government from the intention respecting the railway. He disputed the propriety of the Government's action in putting through this measure in conjunction with the Humber project. This Administration professed opponents—sworn of the Reids—who vilified and abused the Company and its principals in every mood and tense, has been more generous to these people than any other Government in the history of the country. The Premier pledged himself in 1919 to put Reid in his place and rid the country of the incubus that, according to him, was crushing the life out of Newfoundland. He broke faith with the people, however, and allowed his last term to expire without making any attempt to handle this situation and stands convicted to-day of giving Reid nearly \$5,000,000 of the people's money during the past three and a half years, with no returns, in order to carry out a contract for which they have already been well paid. He has committed the country to pay the Reids \$2,000,000 in 5% bonds which, at the end of twenty years will total \$4,000,000. This with the \$5,000,000 paid them the past 3 1/2 years, will mean that the Government will have paid the Reids fully \$10,000,000 and all because of the mess made by the Government and its interference with the railway contractors. In his Manifesto a few months ago, the Premier published the fact that he was going to contract with a well known firm of English capitalists who would run the railway. Now he has made it clear that no such concern or contract had been considered by him or the Government. Once more poor old Newfoundland has been worsted and has already overburdened people called upon to pay the piper for the time that the Reid Company had ordered the Government to play. He was surprised that the public showed such apathy in regard to this all important measure and that certain honorable members on the other side are sitting down quietly and allowing such a nefarious deal to be put through. He concluded

his remarks with the statement that he would vote against the resolutions which in his opinion were against the best interests of the Colony.

Mr. Hunt reviewed the failure of Government to secure legal opinion in 1920. The more the Government had to do with the Railway the greater the loss to the Colony; he denounced strongly the possible outcome of such control which would result in a political conveyance. In referring to the statements of a Government speaker, he said that Government control of the Canadian National Railways by Canada, nearly threatens the national life of Canada, and that is why Sir Henry Thornton was brought over from the Old Country and paid a salary of \$100,000 a year to manage the service. He wanted to know who the group of capitalists Sir Richard Squires referred to in his Manifesto. The statement made by Sir W. F. Coaker that there would be something done in a few months was not good enough. The system would become a political machine for the politicians in all Governments, and any Newfoundlanders who were interested in the Assembly and predicted the certain result of Government control. He said the Premier's statement re English capitalists was pure deception. Sir George Bury got \$15,000 for his advice after a short visit. A Mr. Smith came one day and left the next after seeing what a mess he was likely to get into. Mr. Morgan, an efficient man, said it was impossible to run the service less than \$750,000 loss yearly and not one man in the Government had pluck enough to oppose this agreement. They had been all whipped into line. At this stage he denounced the conduct of the Daily Mail editors and the Premier in their unwarranted conduct and unseemly reference to him daily. He was not going to vote for the resolutions as they stood.

Mr. Peter Cashin gave a general review of the railways in Canada which was interesting to the Assembly and predicted the certain result of Government control. He said the Premier's statement re English capitalists was pure deception. Sir George Bury got \$15,000 for his advice after a short visit. A Mr. Smith came one day and left the next after seeing what a mess he was likely to get into. Mr. Morgan, an efficient man, said it was impossible to run the service less than \$750,000 loss yearly and not one man in the Government had pluck enough to oppose this agreement. They had been all whipped into line. At this stage he denounced the conduct of the Daily Mail editors and the Premier in their unwarranted conduct and unseemly reference to him daily. He was not going to vote for the resolutions as they stood.

Mr. Vincombe joined with his colleagues in the general denunciation of the resolutions which he designated a steal and a very costly contract to the taxpayers and the colony. He was going to oppose the measure.

Mr. Walsh agreed with Mr. Higgins and others in as much as that no Government, much less the one now in power, could successfully run the railway. The experiences of the past three years should be sufficient to teach us a lesson on Government operation. It was deplorable that statements should be made as were made in the Manifesto of 1923 by the Prime Minister to throw the dust in the eyes of the people. It was also deplorable that the Reid Company should be exploited for political purposes. He would vote against the resolutions. The Committee then rose for tea.

NIGHT SESSION.

Mr. Woodford in a very lengthy address spoke on various matters concerning the railway and the resolutions. He was one of the few in public life who voted for the 1898 deal which was introduced by the late Sir James Winter and fathered by Mrs. A. B. Morine, which contract if not interfered with would be of great benefit to the colony particularly now. He blamed the government for the present conditions and the deceitful manner in which they deluded the people. He agreed with Sir M. P. Cashin in his prediction that the resolutions if passed would have the railway "a political swamp." He made a plea for better pay and conditions for the section men who needed well merited consideration.

Mr. Downey who at a previous sitting was absolutely in favour of Government control wished to take back his admitted views in this respect as he had learned the wishes and sentiments of his party associates. He is now converted to the idea that Government control is impossible, he offered his personal recommendation as to his qualifications to rebuild the dock for \$100,000.

Mr. James Moore followed the of economy in the Railway put the that left a very favorable impression on the minds of the members of the House. He thought it a great pity the Government did not seek legal advice in 1920 and all this trouble and expense would have been avoided. The Opposition would not object to even granting certain subsidies to a Company to run the railroad outside of Government control. A road building scheme is now started up in the country to get rid of the people who are looking for work on the Humber. He advocated work on the railroad bed instead of such useless work as that. The road bed was bad and needed repairs and men could be employed there instead of working roads around Bager. Two years of economy on the Railway put the road bed in very bad repair. He registered his protest against Government control absolutely even with an operating commission composed of some politicians.

Mr. H. S. Sullivan spoke on the tremendous responsibility of the Government which walked into a well prepared trap laid by the Reids. He said the Reid Company had ordered the Government to play. He was surprised that the public showed such apathy in regard to this all important measure and that certain honorable members on the other side are sitting down quietly and allowing such a nefarious deal to be put through. He concluded

trouble is the Government played the Reid game and now they must settle. He viewed the settlement as a fairly good one but the sad part of it was Government operation. He said if the Government intended to provide labor they should provide it in improving the railway. The actions of the Government allowed Reids to get the strangle hold on them. You say now it is better to settle for two million dollars than for Reids to take action. It is no good to further debate the resolutions. They will pass as intended and on the heads of the Government be the responsibility.

Mr. Moore (Ferryland) placed himself on record as against the resolutions and said he would register his vote against the measure. He deplored no public opinion being in evidence outside the bar of the House. He would take Mr. Morgan's opinion against that of Mr. Downey's. 25 years ago you would not attempt to do what you are doing to-day.

Mr. Sinnott was the last speaker to register his protest against the resolutions which will be so costly to the country. He recited the bungling of the Government during the past 3 1/2 years in all its dealings with the railway. He regretted the possibility of Government ownership and control of the railway which henceforth will be at the personal use and abuse of politicians. The much to be deplored situation we find ourselves in to-day is due entirely to the maladministration of the Premier and Government. He likewise protested against the manner in which the electorate were deceived by a false railway policy. He urged the Government to get busy and do some profitable construction work and give needed employment to the thousands who, in former years, depended upon the fishery for a living. He was with Mr. Higgins, Sir M. P. Cashin, Mr. Hunt and other speakers in their protest against Government control and was going to cast his vote according to his conscience against the resolutions.

MR. HIGGINS VINDICATED.

At this stage of the proceedings, Mr. Higgins on a question of privilege drew the attention of the House to a statement in the Mail re his attitude in regard to the Labor question, as it pertained to the dispute between the Reids and the N.W.A. some years ago. The statements made were not true. They were used against him during the 1919 election at Bell Island and had been repeated on several occasions since. If he were out of the House he would call the writer a yellow-livered cur, and again, if he were not in the House, he would call the man who made the statements an unmitigated liar, and being in the House he had to say that he dealt with the truth in a very precise manner.



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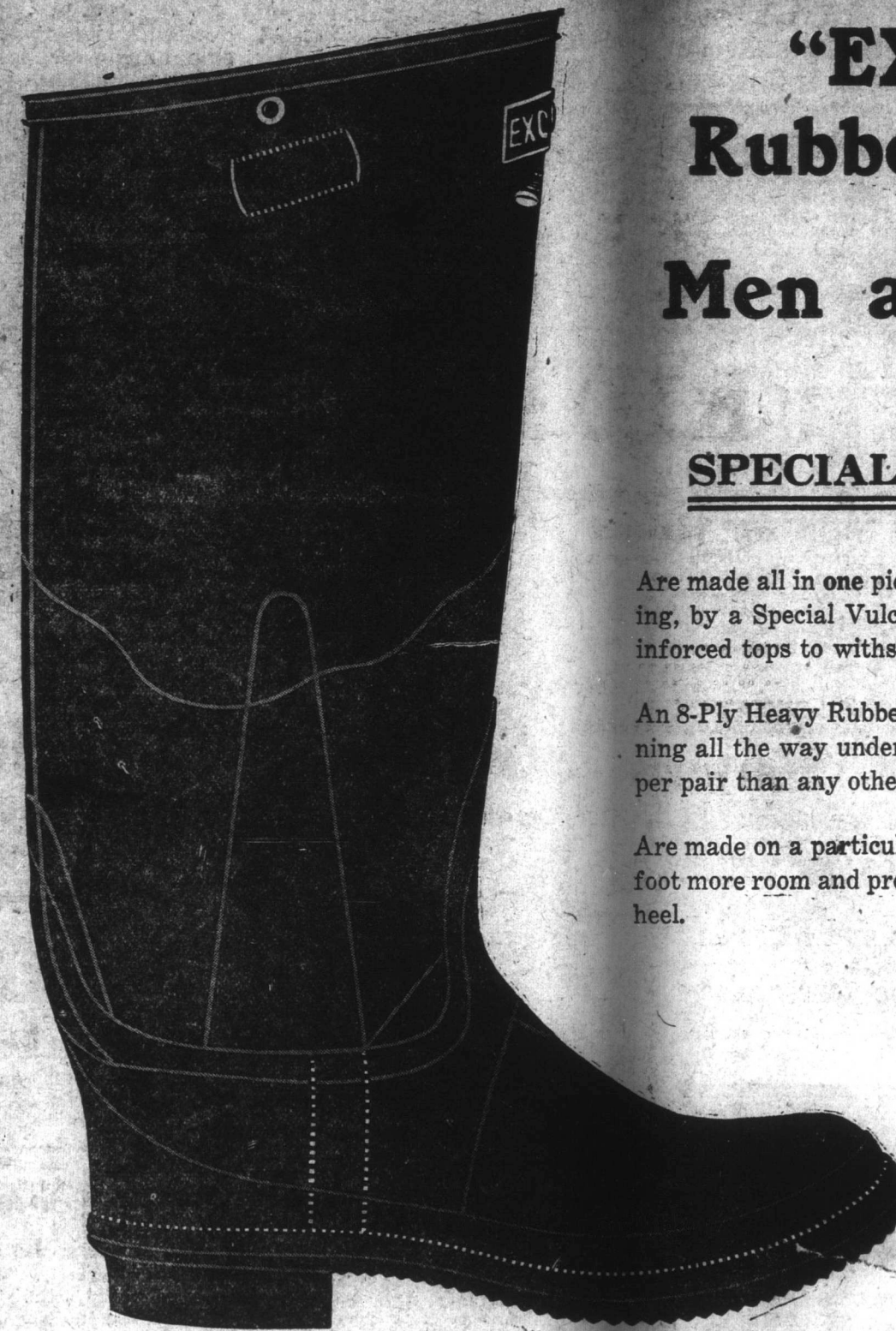
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curious way. He had advocated a minimum wage on the Humber from the purest of motives. The Opposition's criticisms in these last two debates were of a constructive nature and to prove his contention he stated the Company had accepted every amendment they had put forward and they were several. He wanted now, in bringing the matter before the House, to see what class of men he was dealing with on the other side of the House. The man who made the statement on Bell Island, Sir Richard Squires, was present, and also Sir W. F. Coaker who, it is alleged, was present at the meeting in Reids' offices. He said such a meeting never took place. He never took part in such a meeting in his life. He challenged Sir William Coaker to say that he ever attended a meeting with him at Reids' offices or anywhere else.

Sir William Coaker said the statement that Mr. Higgins attended with him to talk of strike matters was without foundation. He never attended such a meeting at which Mr. Higgins was present.

Mr. Higgins—Thank you. Sir Richard Squires was going to say something re the amendment of the minimum wage, when Mr. Higgins asked him a straight question, did he or did he not make the statement on Bell Island, to which Sir Richard Squires replied that not to his knowledge did he make any such statement.

Mr. Higgins—Thank you also. The resolutions were then carried on a strict party vote. On being reported to the House, the report was received on a similar division, the Government party voting solidly for

the measure and the Opposition as solidly against it. The House then adjourned until this afternoon at 3 o'clock.

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