

been in operation from the first day of January, 1915; and then special provision could be made as to section 5. However, if my hon. friend is satisfied with the section and can see clearly what it means, I congratulate him.

Mr. CROTHERS: The first clause of this section as amended is in identically the same words as the original section.

Progress reported.

THE ROYAL ASSENT.

A message was delivered by Lieut.-Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the Deputy of His Royal Highness the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the Chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, the House went up to the Senate.

And having returned,

The Speaker informed the House that His Honour the Deputy of His Royal Highness the Governor General had been pleased to give, in His Majesty's name, the Royal assent to the following Bills:

An Act respecting the Canadian Northern Railway Company.

An Act respecting the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company.

An Act respecting the Central Western Canada Railway Company.

An Act respecting the Quebec, Montreal and Southern Railway Company.

An Act to amend the Railway Act.

SHELL CONTRACTS.

PROPOSED COMMITTEE OF INVESTIGATION.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER moved:

That a special committee of members of this House be appointed to inquire into all purchases of shells or other munitions or goods by the Shell Committee formed by the Minister of Militia, as stated to this House by the Prime Minister on the 15th April, 1915, together with all contracts made or orders given by the said committee for any shells or other munitions or goods, with authority to the said committee to examine witnesses under oath and to require the production of any documents, books, letters or papers; and that such special committee be directed to report from time to time to this House in such manner as it may think advisable.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the reasons which have prompted this motion are well known to the House—well known, I may say, even before I state them. For months past those reasons have been set forth in ever-growing emphasis by the press of all political shades and colours. And, speaking of the press, I may eliminate

on the present occasion the Liberal press, and confine myself, and the authority upon which I rely, entirely to the press which supports the Government, and especially those newspapers which, while strong in their devotion to the party in office, are perhaps yet stronger in their antagonism to the party out of office. I repeat—and nobody I am sure will contradict what I now say—that the press of all shades of politics have for months past been urging that the Government should probe, and probe to the bottom, the transactions of the Shell Committee, as a duty which the Government owed not only to the country, but to itself.

It may be well at this point to inquire into the cause of this passionate, unanimous and persistent attitude of the press. Does it spring from any unworthy motives, from any prurient curiosity, from any desire to injure the Government? No, all these motives can be at once discarded. The only cause which has prompted the attitude of the press is the conviction, early forced upon the Allied nations as the first lesson of this war, that, if they are to win, they must have without any delay whatever, three things: munitions, more munitions, and still more munitions. No one can forget the agony of suspense through which we on this side of the Atlantic passed when the sound of the first shock of battle reached our ears from across the ocean, and when day after day and week after week the bulletins told us the same sad story, that the forces of the Allies were being compelled to retreat from Belgium into France and from the borders of France far into the interior, until at last the German army had reached almost within sight of the steeples of Paris. We did not know then, but we know now that the Allied armies were forced to retreat, not so much because they had to face an enemy immeasurably superior in numbers as because they were outmatched in guns, shells, shrapnel and explosives of all kinds. And when at last the day came with the cheerful news that the Allied armies had taken the offensive; that they had thrown themselves upon the right wing of the German army and had forced it back in confusion from the Marne to the Aisne, great was the hope entertained by every one on this side of the Atlantic that the retrograde movement of the German army would be compelled to continue from the Aisne to the Rhine. This hope, however, was doomed to disappointment, the reason—which we did not know then but which we know now