

SCHOOL LANDS, MANITOBA—SALES BY AUCTION.

Mr. A. A. C. LaRIVIERE (Provencher) moved for:

List of school lands sold at public auction in Manitoba during last year, place of sale and name of auctioneer and other officials in charge of the sale. The name of the purchaser, with the description and acreage of the respective lots purchased, price of sale per acre and amount paid on account. A list of the lots adjudicated but which were subsequently resold, name of first purchaser, price bid and at which adjudication was made; also, price at which sale of same lot was subsequently made, with name of purchaser.

He said: It is a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, that the school lands held for the province of Manitoba are managed by the Department of the Interior of the Federal government, and from time to time sales of portions of these lands are held. Many such sales have taken place in former years. During the past year several sales have taken place at different points, and it appears that speculators attended, and made bids on these lands although they did not intend to carry out their bargain, but rather expected to get the lands at a lower price when they were offered for sale again, and in some instances they actually did succeed in their expectations. I do not for one moment intend to blame the government for what has occurred, but at the same time there is something further to be done in those cases. An inquiry is now being proceeded with into the matter, and from the evidence adduced before the presiding judge it has been found that the system I have referred to has been carried out so extensively that the province of Manitoba will be at the loss of several thousand dollars. There is another phase of this case which constitutes a serious grievance. Bona fide settlers who intended to purchase these lands either to enlarge their own domain, or as farms for their children, have been ousted out of the opportunity of so purchasing by these speculators over-bidding them, and then after the bona fide intending purchaser had left the place the lands were again put up for sale and sold at a lower price than in the first instance. Evidence is daily being adduced before the presiding judge giving further instances of this kind of thing. I will not undertake to read that evidence, as it is rather long, and indeed as the inquiry has not yet been concluded, it would perhaps be premature to bring the matter before the House. I trust that as soon as this inquiry is completed and as soon as the government is convinced that there have been frauds perpetrated, that all these corrupt and fraudulent sales will be cancelled and that a chance will be given to bona fide settlers to purchase these lands. I am glad to know that an investigation has been ordered, because there undoubtedly has been something wrong

Mr. FISHER.

going on. When this investigation is completed it will be the further duty of the government to rectify the wrong that has been perpetrated to the detriment of the bona fide settlers who intended to purchase those lands.

The MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR (Hon. Clifford Sifton). There is no objection whatever on the part of the government to bringing down the information which the hon. gentleman asks for. I can readily understand his desire that full and detailed information should be in his possession and in the possession of the House in regard to this matter, which in the province of Manitoba is a matter of great importance. So soon as my attention was called to the fact that there were charges of irregularities in connection with the sale, steps were taken to order an investigation, and the investigation has been going on for some time past under the direction of His Honour Judge Prendergast, one of the county judges of the province of Manitoba. We have asked Judge Prendergast to complete his report as rapidly as possible, so that it may be laid before parliament. So soon as the report is in my hands, I will have it laid before parliament without any unnecessary delay. I can assure the hon. gentleman that everything that can be done by the department to protect the interests of bona fide buyers will be done. Of course, it would be altogether improper for me to express any opinion until the result of the investigation is known; but I might say that the investigation so far indicates that the first reports regarding the irregularities were very much exaggerated. That may or may not be the case. When the judge's report is here, we shall be able to decide.

Motion agreed to.

YUKON—IMPORTATION OF LIQUORS.

Sir CHARLES HIBBERT TUPPER moved for:

Return showing an itemized statement of the number of gallons of spirituous and malt liquors taken into the Yukon district since the period covered by return (1900), the number of permits issued therefor, names and post office addresses of those persons or companies to whom permits were granted, and the amount paid therefor, and all correspondence connected therewith.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I might remind the hon. Minister of the Interior that the language of the motion is exactly the language of the motion moved last session, which was complied with in the form there suggested. I have followed the same form for the purpose of comparison of the particulars brought down in the return of last session with those which I would like to have continued in this.

Motion agreed to.