

3. What was the cost of the repairs to said wharf?

Hon. Mr. COPP:

1. \$6,500, based on estimated cost of replacement of landing head, portion of approach and freight shed.

2. O. Dubois, \$4.90; Jos. Bertrand, \$4.90; Ernest Brabant, \$4.90; P. Dubois, \$4.90; Charles G. Smith, \$4.90; C. Dubois, \$4.90; E. Landriault, \$4.90; P. Brabant, \$2.10.

3. Repairs made, due to damage caused by fire, cost \$3,969.13.

EXCISE TAX ON ALCOHOL

Mr. HUBBS:

1. Does the Government intend to reduce the excise tax on alcohol to the retail druggists?

2. If so, will the said tax be made the same as that charged the manufacturers at the distillery or bonded warehouse?

Hon. Mr. FIELDING: Announcement of such taxation changes as the Government will propose will be made in the Budget speech.

RAILWAY RATES

PROPOSED SELECT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

Hon. W. C. KENNEDY (Minister of Railways) moved:

That notwithstanding that the regulation of railway rates is a matter within the jurisdiction of the Board of Railway Commissioners, it is advisable that a Select Special Committee be appointed to make inquiry into the question of railway transportation costs, it having been disclosed by recent conferences held between the Government and the chief executives of the various railways with respect to the reduction of freight rates that the representatives of the railways deem it inadvisable immediately to reduce rates on basic commodities because of the expiration, on July 6th, 1922, of the suspension of the Crow's Nest Pass agreement;

That, in the circumstances, it is advisable to afford opportunity to all interested parties to submit their views upon the subject matter of the inquiry to the said committee with particular regard to the effect of the rates established by the Crow's Nest Pass agreement upon Canadian National railways and other lines, as well as upon agricultural development and Canadian industry generally;

And that the said committee shall have power to send for persons, papers and records, including the minutes and evidence taken before the Committees of this House in previous Sessions, to examine witnesses under oath, and to report from time to time.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to speak to this motion, but merely to say, I do not think the Government has any right to go on with it this afternoon. This is an important motion

—relative, at least, to anything else on the Order Paper; and, questioned last night as to what the business to-day was to be, the Prime Minister answered:

We will take up the estimates of the Department of Indian Affairs, Mines, and Public Works.

There was no intimation whatever that this motion was to be gone on with. It is unfair to the Opposition—indeed, it is unfair to the House on both sides—that it should be gone on with when it was not mentioned last night.

Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): I agree entirely with my right hon. friend; that it was not mentioned last night was an oversight. Possibly we might have an understanding now that we proceed with it on Tuesday next.

Motion stands.

STATEMENT OF PREMIER NORRIS

On the Orders of the Day:

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): I desire to ask some questions of the Government as to a reported statement by Mr. Norris, Premier of Manitoba, with relation to the subject of railway rates and other matters. In the Montreal Gazette, but as well in many other papers, Mr. Norris is reported to have said at a public meeting, after a rather prolonged sojourn in Ottawa, that the Railway Commission had come to a decision on this subject of railway rates, and he virtually announced what the decision was to be. For exactness, I read very briefly his words:

Important pronouncements were made by the Premier in connection with the freight rates and the natural resources questions.

With respect to freight rates, Premier Norris announced that the fight put up by the provincial government for reduced rates had been successful, and that before the 1922 grain crop began to move a reduction would be effected which would mean an annual saving of approximately \$8,000,000 to the province.

Later the quotation is as follows:

Mr. Norris, who returned from Ottawa, a few days ago, reviewed in his address to the convention the fight during the past three years to obtain lower freight rates. Arguments presented to the Railway Commissioners by counsel for the province had resulted in breaking down the railways' case for continuance of what he called present excessive rates.

I am not asking whether this is a correct report of what Mr. Norris said; if, however, the Government desire to make a statement on that, it is for them to decide. Knowing that a provincial election is near