

Winnipeg Tribune

May 9/23

036860

THE HOPPE COAL LANDS

The Senate committee which has been occupied for some weeks in uncovering the true facts respecting the leases of the Hoppe coal lands in Alberta, has issued a report which should give satisfaction to all those who do not want to see the natural resources of Canada bartered away to private speculators.

The story of the Hoppe leases reflects to some extent on the devious methods of speculators in general. In 1912 certain coal areas in Alberta were leased to two Germans named Hoppe and Iseburgs. During the war the

leases were cancelled owing to non-payment of fees, and the property was set aside as a crown reservation. Some time later it became known that the coal deposits on the land were of far greater value than had first been supposed. The attention of Canadian speculators, including, it has been openly stated, certain members of the senate and the House of Commons, became at once rivetted on the matter. Many attempts, it is claimed, were made to have the property quietly alienated from the crown and restored to the Hoppe people upon payment of back rentals on the understanding that the Hoppe people should sell out to a Canadian syndicate that was being formed to take over the property and dispose of it later to certain coal interests in Great Britain. As a result of this pressure the Dominion government last year, against the advice of its own department of justice, granted the Hoppe interests a fiat, that is, the right to enter action against the government, to secure the return of their leases on the payment of back rentals.

The whole matter aroused so much suspicion in the country, certain senators being openly named as involved, that the government felt called upon to appoint a senate committee to investigate the whole affair. This committee, which heard evidence in private, now recommends that the government should introduce a bill to revoke the fiat and thus check any further action towards the restoration of the leases to the Hoppe interests. Such a bill, it is understood, will shortly be introduced, and if passed, will mean that the so-called Hoppe coal lands, with their inexhaustible supplies will remain the property of the people of Canada.

MEIGHEN PAPERS, Series 3 (M.G. 26, I, Volume 15)

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