

House resolved to go into Committee of the Whole to-day on a resolution providing for an increase in judges' salaries.

THE FUEL SITUATION.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING RAILWAY COMMITTEE TO MAKE NECESSARY ORDERS.

On motion of Right Hon. Sir Robert Borden (Prime Minister), the House went into committee, Mr. Boivin in the Chair, on the following proposed resolution:

Resolved, that it is expedient to bring in a measure amending The Railway Act, 1919, by adding thereto provisions conferring upon the Board of Railway Commissioners of Canada, power to do and authorize all such acts and things and to make from time to time all such orders and regulations as the board may deem necessary or advisable by reason of real apprehended scarcity of coal and other fuel supplies in Canada.

Rt. Hon. Sir ROBERT BORDEN (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, when I last spoke to the House on this subject I dealt with the situation in respect to the importations of coal up to the 31st May. I then gave to the House a statement of the importations during the present year as compared with those of last year. The statement I then made was very encouraging with respect to the period from the 1st January to the 31st May this year as indicating that importations during the present year had been somewhat greater than during the corresponding period of last year. Since that time the two ministers who were particularly charged with the consideration and investigation of the situation with regard to coal, have been giving very close and earnest attention thereto and on Saturday I was informed by my hon. friend the Minister of Labour (Mr. Robertson) that a somewhat serious condition had arisen particularly during the past four or five days and that there is urgent need for some such action as that which is indicated in the resolution now before the committee. I think it is best I should read to the committee a report which I asked for, which was handed to me this morning and which embodies the information presented to me about noon on Saturday. I should say that immediately upon receiving this information I took the subject into consideration, discussed it with such of my colleagues as were available and decided that the resolution in question should be placed on the Order Paper. The report of the two ministers

[Sir Robert Borden.]

which was handed to me this morning, is as follows:

OTTAWA, June 28, 1920.

To His Excellency, the Governor General in Council:

The undersigned ministers, having been delegated by His Excellency the Governor in Council to give special attention to the coal situation and alleged shortage in coal supply, have the honour to report that:

From January 1 to June 1, 1920, the importations of both anthracite and bituminous coal from the United States exceeded the quantity received during the same period in 1919, but, because of the reserves being low, was scarcely sufficient to supply the normal requirements. Since April 15 of this year, and particularly since June 1, receipts of coal have been very irregular and unsatisfactory.

The provinces of Ontario and Quebec are wholly dependent upon outside sources for their supply of coal. The province of Ontario alone requires three and one half millions of tons of anthracite per year, or approximately 64,500 cars, which means an average shipment of about 200 cars per day for each day in the year. Since April 1st of this year we were short on our daily receipts 125 cars per day. Ontario requires eleven millions of tons of bituminous coal annually, equivalent to 220,000 cars of 50 tons each, or a daily shipment of 600 cars. From April 1st to June 15th, 28,930 cars, or 380 cars per day were received, leaving a shortage in daily receipts of bituminous coal of 220 cars per day. The situation in Quebec is much similar though accurate figures are not at the moment available.

Our investigations clearly indicate a most serious situation so far as transportation in the United States is concerned, inadequate car supply and strikes of railway employees largely contributing to the serious congestion. Industries in the United States are, in many instances, curtailing their output or closing down for lack of fuel, and the Government of that country has placed the control of the distribution of coal in the hands of the Interstate Commerce Commission who have, we are informed, made three orders which have a bearing on the situation here, i.e.

- (1) Embargoed the exportation of coal from the Atlantic ports to outside countries;
- (2) Fixed priorities;
- (3) Are permitting only such cars to come to Canada as they are assured will be unloaded within twenty four hours from the time they are placed, and, further, that the cars will be returned direct for re-loading.

It is further apparent that this pooling arrangement and distribution through the commission in order of priority is having the effect of sending many Canadian coal cars to other destinations, rendering the car situation still more difficult.

It is to be further observed that there have been exported from Canada, between January 1st and June 1st, 1920, approximately 160,000 tons of coal from Nova Scotia to European ports, principally Holland and France. Prior to the war approximately two million tons per year were brought from the Nova Scotia fields up the St. Lawrence, principally to Montreal, which supply has been almost entirely cut off.

In view of the United States having embargoed the exported coal to foreign countries, be-