

Mr. STEVENS: What was the duty on this before?

Mr. ROBB: This is a reclassification; it came under 25 per cent.

Item agreed to.

Customs tariff—588. Coal, bituminous and coal, n.o.p., per ton: British preferential tariff, 35 cents; intermediate tariff, 45 cents; general tariff, 50 cents.

Mr. STEVENS: Would this change bring slack coal up to the level of ordinary run of mine?

Mr. ROBB: This reduces the ordinary run of mine coal 3 cents per ton, making it 50 cents, and it brings the slack coal up to that. It wipes out the slack coal item altogether.

Mr. STEVENS: Which previously was free?

Mr. ROBB: No, 14 cents.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I should like again to call attention to the fact that at this very time we have a good deal of trouble in the coal mining area of Nova Scotia, and it has been said by the government that there is some difficulty in their taking action. I cannot myself see the grounds of that difficulty, but it has been stated that the government is more or less precluded from action because of the decision of the Privy Council with regard to the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. Be that as it may, the fact is that there is a serious difficulty there and this government cannot avoid all responsibility in the matter. There is clearly one course that could be taken to force an investigation. Statements have been made by the miners with regard to the situation while other statements have been made by the operators. There is no evidence whatever before the public that if further protection is granted the operators it will be any help to the miners themselves. Further than that, there is no guarantee whatever that protection to the miners will mean any help at all to the consumers of coal. Under these circumstances it would seem absolutely essential, before the government or parliament can act intelligently, that there should be a fact-finding commission. It seems to me that this is due the public at large, and it is also due parliament before we are asked to vote on the matter. I should like to urge that it is the responsibility of the government to bring before us absolutely reliable statistics as to the cost of mining coal and as to the whole of the financial arrangements connected with the British Empire Steel Corporation before the public is asked to give further assistance in this matter.

[Mr. George Black.]

Mr. EVANS: I cannot help thinking that this duty on coal is very ill-advised. The government would have done much better to have accepted reciprocity in the matter of coal with the United States, who offer free trade in this commodity to all who will reciprocate. I cannot help thinking that coal, all the way across Canada, will be dearer for the householder than it has ever been. The natural market for coal for eastern Canada is in the Maritime provinces as well as in the New England states, and the natural market for Alberta coal is to the south and in the three prairie provinces. I think it is futile to spread Canadian coal over the whole of the Dominion either by means of a duty or by a railway subsidy. I think it is well established that even with this duty matters will not mend very much in Nova Scotia. There seems to exist there a situation which it will take more than 50 cents of a duty per ton on coal to overcome. There we see day after day an outrage committed against men, women and children which is besmirching the fair name of the British Empire. No British fair play is shown to the operatives in that area, and I think that their very nakedness and the suffering of these people are simply used as a lever to extort a high duty on coal for the benefit of the mine owner. The whole thing is wrong. Along with my hon. friend (Mr. Woodsworth) I want to see some interference on the part of the government in behalf of these operatives. It is time we took the matter in hand, and if the pride of Nova Scotia will suffer in consequence then I think the people there will have to pocket their pride for the time being. Certainly a duty rests on the government to interfere and put an end to the awful conditions now prevailing in Glace Bay.

Item agreed to.

Customs tariff—588a. Gas for heating, cooking or illuminating, per one thousand cubic feet: British preferential tariff, 6 cents; intermediate tariff, 6 cents; general tariff, 6 cents.

Mr. ROBB: I move that the item be amended by adding after the word "illuminating" the words "by pipe line."

Mr. STEVENS: What is the reason for this change, and what is the present duty?

Mr. ROBB: For many years there has been a duty of 17½ per cent, but it has never been imposed by any government. Recently we had a request from a municipality to reduce the duty as they wanted to import this gas. Therefore we are reducing the duty to a point where it can be properly administered—six cents instead of 17½ per cent.