

The negotiations which were set on foot during the recess between Her Majesty's Government and that of the United States in reference to the settlement of certain questions in dispute between Canada and the latter country were, I grieve to say, greatly delayed by the illness and subsequent death of two of the most eminent members of the commission appointed for that purpose. Considerable progress had been made on several of the subjects submitted, but a serious disagreement arose between Her Majesty's Commissioners and the Commissioners of the United States on the question of the delimitation of the boundary between Canada and Alaska; the question was referred by the commissioners to their respective Governments, the commission being adjourned to the 2nd day of August next, in the hope that, in the meantime, the difficulty might be overcome.

In compliance with the Act passed last session a plebiscite was held on the question of prohibition; the official figures of the vote will be placed before you.

I observe with pleasure that the mother country, Canada and other British possessions have recently adopted a penny postage letter rate. The satisfaction with which this action has been received by the Canadian people is a further proof of the general desire existing amongst our people for closer relations with the mother country and the rest of the Empire.

I am also glad to be able to state that the satisfactory condition of the finances of the country permitted a reduction, on the 1st of January last, of the Canadian domestic letter rate, from three to two cents and although such reduction involves a temporary loss of revenue, it is nevertheless confidently expected that the cheapened rate will prove of such service in the promotion of trade and in the general interchange of correspondence that, within a reasonable time, the revenue of the Post Office Department will be restored to its former figure.

Much information has been obtained since you last met relative to the extent and value of the deposits of gold and valuable minerals in the Yukon and other parts of Canada. The returns from the Yukon have so far proved sufficient to meet the heavy expenditure it was found necessary to incur for the purpose of preserving law and order, and it has been thought expedient in the public interest to authorize the construction of a line of telegraph for the purpose of maintaining speedy communication with the people of those distant territories.

A measure will be submitted to you for the better arrangement of the electoral districts throughout the Dominion, as also several enactments of less importance.

Gentlemen of the House of Commons:

The public accounts will be laid before you, and also the estimates for the coming year.

They have been prepared with a due regard to efficiency and economy, and the responsibilities arising from the rapid progress of the country.

Honourable Gentlemen of the Senate:

Gentlemen of the House of Commons:

I am confident that the important subjects I have mentioned to you will receive your serious consideration, and that it will be your earnest endeavour to promote the public interest and prosperity of Canada.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) moved:

That the Speech of His Excellency the Governor General to both Houses of Parliament be taken into consideration on Monday next.

Motion agreed to.

SELECT STANDING COMMITTEES.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) moved:

That Select Standing Committees of this House for the present session be appointed for the following purposes:—1. On Privileges and Elections.—2. On Expiring Laws.—3. On Railways, Canals and Telegraph Lines.—4. On Miscellaneous Private Bills.—5. On Standing Orders.—6. On Printing.—7. On Public Accounts.—8. On Banking and Commerce.—9. On Agriculture and Colonization,—which said committees shall severally be empowered to examine and inquire into all such matters and things as may be referred to them by the House; and to report from time to time their observations and opinions thereon; with power to send for persons, papers and records.

Motion agreed to.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier) moved:

That a Select Committee be appointed to supervise the official report of the debates of this House during the present session, with power to report from time to time, to be composed of Messrs. Beausoleil, Bergeron, Charlton, Champagne, Craig, Davin, Earle, Ellis, Haley, La-Rivière, Monet, Richardson, Scriver, Somerville and Taylor.

He said: This is the same committee as last year, with the exception only of Mr. Champagne, who takes the place of Mr. Choquette.

Motion agreed to.

REPORT.

Report of the Joint Librarians of Parliament.—(Mr. Speaker.)

ADJOURNMENT—DECEASED MEMBERS.

The PRIME MINISTER (Sir Wilfrid Laurier). I beg leave to move, seconded by Sir Charles Tupper: