

In 1925 the present management looked over the property, but decided that the proposal that the line should be taken over could not be considered at that time.

The question of the possible acquisition of the line will have further attention in connection with railway matters generally as affecting the Maritime Provinces.

The Senate adjourned until Tuesday next at 8 p.m.

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THE SENATE
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Tuesday, June 5, 1928.

The Senate met at 8 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT BILL

FIRST READING

Bill 288, an Act to amend the Soldier Settlement Act.—Hon. Mr. Dandurand.

ST. LAWRENCE WATERWAY INQUIRY

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. C. E. TANNER: Honourable gentlemen, on a question of privilege, not relating to myself personally, but to the Senate in general, I wish to direct attention for one or two moments to an article which appeared on June 2nd in the Manitoba Free Press. The article is headed "Senate Secrecy," and is apparently from the staff correspondent. It is dated from Ottawa, and reads as follows:

Ottawa.—The Senate of Canada has the distinction of being the only legislative body in Canada whose committees are required by rule to sit in camera. The committees of the House of Commons and of the various provincial Legislatures are always open to the public unless the members decide otherwise, and then such a decision governs only the committee meeting in progress.

The Senate, apparently, decided to reverse the usual order of procedure and to that end included in the rules the following provisions:

"Senators, though not of the committee, are not excluded from coming in and speaking (at meetings of committees), but they must not vote. They sit behind those who are of the committee. No other persons, unless commanded to attend, are to enter at any meeting of a committee of the Senate or at any conference."

This rule, extraordinary as it may seem, has not been a dead letter in the rule book of the Upper House. Only a few days ago it was enforced in a very remarkable manner. A

committee was appointed by the Senate to inquire into the Greater St. Lawrence Waterways and when the inquiry got under way several citizens and newspaper correspondents who desired to attend the hearings, and, in some cases, to offer information, found that they were excluded. This exclusion has not been maintained throughout but the present position is that no one can tell until the committee meets if the session is to be secret or open.

I am at a loss to understand how anyone could become impressed with the idea that the hearings of the Committee were not wide open. I never gave any such direction except on one day in the early stages. On that one occasion the public were not admitted for the reason that the only business was to decide about some witnesses proposed to be called. That meeting only lasted a few minutes. No witnesses were heard.

Lest I should be criticized, I reminded the Committee of the Senate rule mentioned. The Committee at once unanimously approved of the open door. Moreover, the Committee had decided to print the evidence of witnesses, and the Senate approved. As usual, the press has been supplied with copies. Having decided to publish the evidence of witnesses and distribute such evidence, why should the Committee attempt "secrecy" by hearing witnesses behind closed doors?

If there were doubt in any person's mind in this regard, I was always accessible to anyone who desired to be informed. The Clerk of Committees was also always accessible. It would have been an easy matter to make enquiry—quite as easy as to send the inaccurate report I have read.

The Committee have been seeking information and have nothing to hide. It is regrettable that in respect to such an important national matter an inaccurate and misleading report in regard to the Committee has been published.

I should add that as far as I know only one newspaper published the inaccurate report.

FOREIGN VESSELS IN CANADIAN CANALS

ANSWER TO INQUIRY

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Although the question of my honourable friend from De Lanaudière (Hon. Mr. Casgrain) has disappeared from the Order Paper, I bring to him an answer to his inquiry of May 22nd, concerning ships that have gone up the St. Lawrence in the spring and returned to the ocean in the autumn.