

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

Thursday, May 6, 1926

The House met at three o'clock.

MARINE AND FISHERIES
COMMITTEE

Mr. ALFRED STORK (Skeena) presented the first report of the select standing committee on Marine and Fisheries as follows:

Your committee recommends that it be authorized to have its proceedings and such evidence as may be taken printed from day to day or as may be required for use of the members of the committee and of the House and that rule 74 in relation thereto be suspended.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion for the adoption of this report must be preceded by notice.

FUEL SUPPLY

COMMITTEE OF INVESTIGATION—PERSONNEL

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister) moved:

That the special committee appointed on Monday, March 15 to investigate our present sources of supply of anthracite and bituminous coal, the dependability of such sources, and other matters in relation thereto be composed of the following members namely: Messieurs Armstrong (Lambton), Bury, Campbell, Fleming, Garland (Bow River), Gershaw, Howden, Lapierre, MacDonald (Cape Breton South), McLean (Melfort), Neill and Nicholson with power to send for persons, papers and records and to report from time to time.

Mr. T. L. CHURCH (Toronto Northwest): May I point out to the government that a committee similar to that now proposed was appointed in the session of 1923 with precisely the same powers and for the performance of the same functions. That committee went into the subject exhaustively, taking evidence covering practically several hundred pages; before it appeared the head officials of both railways in Canada. Now, I do not believe that the appointment of any special committee at this date, entering as we are upon the fifth month of the session, will get us anywhere on the coal question. The facts are all well known, and the government is perfectly aware that the matter is solely a question of transportation. The committee appointed in 1923 made recommendations looking to a national fuel supply and although the government accepted those recommendations, they failed to put them into effect.

In view of the strike in England and Wales to-day there will be a fuel famine during the coming fall and winter such as has never been experienced before. The onus for a proper fuel supply in this country rests not upon any committee or commission, but entirely upon the government of the day. The best part of the Canadian merchant marine, the vessels that could sail the lakes, this government has sold, and now the country expects that the national railways shall be mobilized to solve this problem. When the matter was discussed by the previous committee it was admitted that the \$7 rate would be satisfactory and take care of all overhead. Why has not the Prime Minister accepted that rate? He has referred this important matter to the decision of the railway commission, so that we shall receive no report upon it before August next when it will be too late to get a supply of fuel. The Montreal Board of Trade, I may point out, realizing the gravity of the present strike situation in Great Britain, predicts a coal famine and economic newspapers and banking journals declare that there is likelihood of another strike taking place in the United States before the summer comes. Now, why refer this question to a committee? What object can be served by such a reference? The object of the committee as stated in the Prime Minister's motion is to investigate our present sources of supply of anthracite and bituminous coal and the dependability of such sources. It seems to me that if the committee were to investigate the dependability of the present government to solve this problem it might be more to the point. The government, in my opinion, are depending altogether too much upon Sir Henry Thornton and appear to be absolutely incapable of taking the initiative themselves. All the evidence that was given before the special committee appointed a couple of years ago, evidence contained in several hundred pages, shows quite clearly that this is purely and simply a transportation question. Sir Henry Thornton's officials and his experts who were examined before that committee were quite agreeable to the \$7 rate but the government have refused to act upon the recommendations of that committee. I repeat, they are allowing Sir Henry Thornton to usurp