

# Mr. COAKER'S SPEECH ON THE SEALING BILL

Mr. Coaker—Mr. Chairman, in moving the House into a Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill, I wish to make a few observations regarding its principles.

The other day when talking about Agriculture the hon. the hon. the Premier wanted to know how much vegetables were used in the sealing steamers. I went to the trouble to find out, and I find that as regards potatoes, that there are now 1,800 barrels used in the steamers as against none before the sealing agreement was entered into.

There were some put on board for the captain's table, but what I now refer to are in addition to those put aboard for the captain.

### Food Supplies.

There are 360 barrels of turnips, 180 sacks of onions, and 350 barrels of flour now used. It has also increased the consumption of pork and beef and there are 180 barrels of each now used, and 350 sacks of beans. All these are in addition to what were used before the agreement came into force.

Some opposition has been raised to Section 7 of the Bill, which provides for the close season in 1914-1915 for hood seals. Now, the contention opposed to that section of the Bill is that it will interfere with the wooden ships, and I have received some letters from some of the owners in connection with this matter. I have a letter here from Messrs. Baine Johnston & Co., objecting to it.

### Wooden Ships.

Now, there are only five wooden ships—that is not including the Fogot and Sagona—sailing to the front this year, and as I understand from what the Premier has said that it is his intention when introducing his Sealing Resolutions next week, to insert something with regard to a close season, I have no objection to withdrawing that section, if the Government intend to move in this matter and appoint some Committee and probably take evidence from the captains and others who understand the seal-fishery, so that some provision of this nature can be made in the House next year.

In the meantime, I would like to show to the Committee that the wooden ships have not brought in a great many hood seals since the steel ships have been prosecuting the fishery.

I have some statistics for the last

six years. In 1913 the steel ships brought in from the front 7,500 hoods and the wooden ships brought in 3,000. In 1912 out of a total of 21,730 hood seals brought in from the front, the wooden ships brought in only 400. In 1911 out of 35,000 brought in the wooden ships brought 17,300. Out of 10,000 brought in in 1910 the wooden ships brought in only 150. In 1909 out of 14,000 brought in the wooden ships brought 2,000, and that year the Florizel brought 11,000.

In 1908 out of 500 brought in the wooden ships had 300. In 1911 there were 1,700 brought in by the Beothic, and 4,300 brought in by the Adventure.

### Come in "Clean."

These figures do not go to prove that if a clause were put in the Bill prohibiting the killing of hood seals the wooden ships would come in clean, because since the steel ships came in the wooden ships have not been able to get them.

The wooden ships for the period under consideration have not got more than 20 per cent. of the catch. These wooden ships cannot compare with the iron ships as they have not the same power to force their way through the heavy ice. Since the steel ships have been carrying on the fishery the number of old seals taken has been on the increase.

Of course, any year the ice breaks up early the steamers all go looking for the old ones. Then if you get the young hood you will also get the old bitch hood, because it will stand by its young until it is killed.

### Wanted Close Season.

Capt. Kean in a report of the seal-fishery made to the Fishery Department advocated a close season for bedlamers, and he pointed out in that report how easy it is to kill whole families of hoods in case they are reached before the young take to the water, because the mother hood will stand by its young until it is killed.

Three years ago the F.P.U. brought this matter before the owners and asked that no guns be put on board any of the steamers. It was finally agreed that guns would only be carried by the wooden ships, and in order to protect the hoods it was agreed that a \$200 fine would be imposed for every bitch hood brought in.

Every sealing ship owner in the country, with the exception of the

Newfoundland Produce Co., signed this agreement.

### God the Hoods.

That year the Nascope got in trouble with her propeller and missed the young seals. She came across the hoods and got 20,000 of them, amongst which were a large number of bitch hoods.

No action was taken to recover the amount because there was no way to dispose of the penalty.

Now, one way to protect these hood seals would be to have a close season in 1914-15, but as I have said, if the Government intend to move in relation to this matter, I have no objection to withdrawing this section of the Bill, and waiting till next year for something to be done in the matter.

### Panning of Seals.

I wish to refer to another matter which I hope will be taken up by the Government next year, that is in connection with the panning of seals. We ask that there should be no right of property in panned seals. This will compel the large steel ships to pick up their seals promptly, and many seals which are now killed and lost would be saved.

I may say there is a very strong opinion in the country in favor of the adoption of this proposal, that there should not be any right of property in panned seals, and from what I can learn I believe that this would be a good enactment and fully justified and in the interests of the seal-fishery.

I think that the killing of seals should not be allowed until one day later than at present. Seals about March 17th grow 5 lbs. a day, and a patch containing 200,000 seals would grow 450 tons in a day, or about the weight of 25,000 prime young seals. This is a matter that the Government should consider very seriously when it is bringing in the resolutions with reference to the seal-fishery.

### Trust Era Coming.

I am of the opinion that in the course of a few years you will find all the steel fleet owned or controlled by a trust. These large steamers will be managed by the trust, and the wooden ones will not be allowed to participate in the fishery, or at least, not in the front of the country where the steel ships go.

This will mean that six or seven steel ships will have all the seals on

the front, and they will be under the command of a commodore, who will correspond to an admiral in the Navy. He will say to the different captains: "You go south," or "You go North," and so on. The whole thing will be planned out beforehand. It is certain that one of them will strike the main patch. It will be an easy matter to communicate with the other steamers, as they will all be fitted up with wireless apparatus. This will result in the whole patch being cleaned up.

### Must Be Prevented.

I do firmly believe that this state of affairs will be arrived at, unless it is prevented by the Government, and I have said so to the owners of the steamers. They merely smiled at me and said that stranger things have happened.

I trust the Government will agree to the suggestion of a close season, for unless measures such as these are taken, it will not be long before we will find that the whole herd has been killed out.

Another matter about which there is a grievance is the payment of the captains, who now receive four per cent. of the gross value of the voyage. Last year we thought to have this amount decreased and one per cent. allowed to the officers, but it fell through.

We hope that next year there will be a change made so that it will be impossible for the captain to get more than three per cent. and the remainder one per cent. to go to the officers.

### Not Well Paid.

These men receive practically nothing, although some of them are the equals of their captain. They receive a share among them, and they consider that this is unfair. The owners also think that it is unfair, and for these reasons there should be no great difficulty in having the scale changed.

Some object to the landing of the crews, or a portion of a crew previous to the 10th of April, but I am afraid that if the Committee does not allow this section to pass there will be considerable trouble among the crews on the wooden ships. We have had examples of it already, for last year the Erik was forced to go to Bonavista and land a hundred men. The crew refused to proceed any further with the voyage and for a time they had quite a rough time on board. I had particulars of the event, and I

am afraid that if the steamer did not land the men they would have taken control of her.

### Forced to Land Crew.

In the year before the Diana was forced to come home, because the men refused to stay out any longer, and the result was that Capt. Blandford lost his command. The same thing happened the year before that, in the same steamer.

If there is no way of obtaining a satisfactory arrangement, there will certainly be trouble, especially if they miss the young fat, and spend two or three weeks vainly looking for old ones, and there is a prospect of the men receiving no more than five or ten dollars for their spring's work. It is a very serious matter to the men and to the owners, and something must be done in the matter.

We suggested first that the voyage terminate on April 15th, but the merchants objected to this very strongly for they claimed that under such conditions it would be impossible for the wooden ships to get any old seals.

They say they get the old seals between the 20th and the end of April, for it was easier to get them at that time and that in most of the seasons it was at that period that the wooden steamers got most of their old seals.

I did no object to their position,

and finally some of the owners wanted to take out their crews in two sections, one to stay out the whole voyage and another to come home earlier.

I then said that I would put in a section to cover the matter that would be satisfactory to the crew. One or two of the owners objected on the ground that the steamer might be driven out of her way in order to land crews, but I submit that this can be made a matter of arrangement.

For instance, a captain may take a part of his crew from Catalina and agree to land them there again on the 10th of April, and ship another fifty men who will agree to serve the whole voyage. There is nothing to prevent him from doing this, and he could easily get five hundred men from Catalina, Melrose, Bonavista, Eliston and vicinity, if they did not have to stay out the whole time.

### Not Much Trouble.

The same would apply to other places, such as Fogo. It would not be much trouble to land these men, for the steamers are usually right off the coast on the 10th April, and it is only a matter of twenty-four hours to land the crews and put to sea again.

I can see no objection to the section, and I feel sure that it will result in good to all concerned, and, as I have pointed out, there is certain to be lots of trouble if it is not passed.

I have prepared some statistics as to the number of ships which have prosecuted the seal fishery, and I find that the largest number of ships went to the icefields in 1857, when there were 400.

These took out 13,000 men. 500,000 seals were taken, and the value of the fishery was \$1,200,000. The largest number of men were engaged in 1861, when 292 ships took out 14,421 men.

(To be continued)

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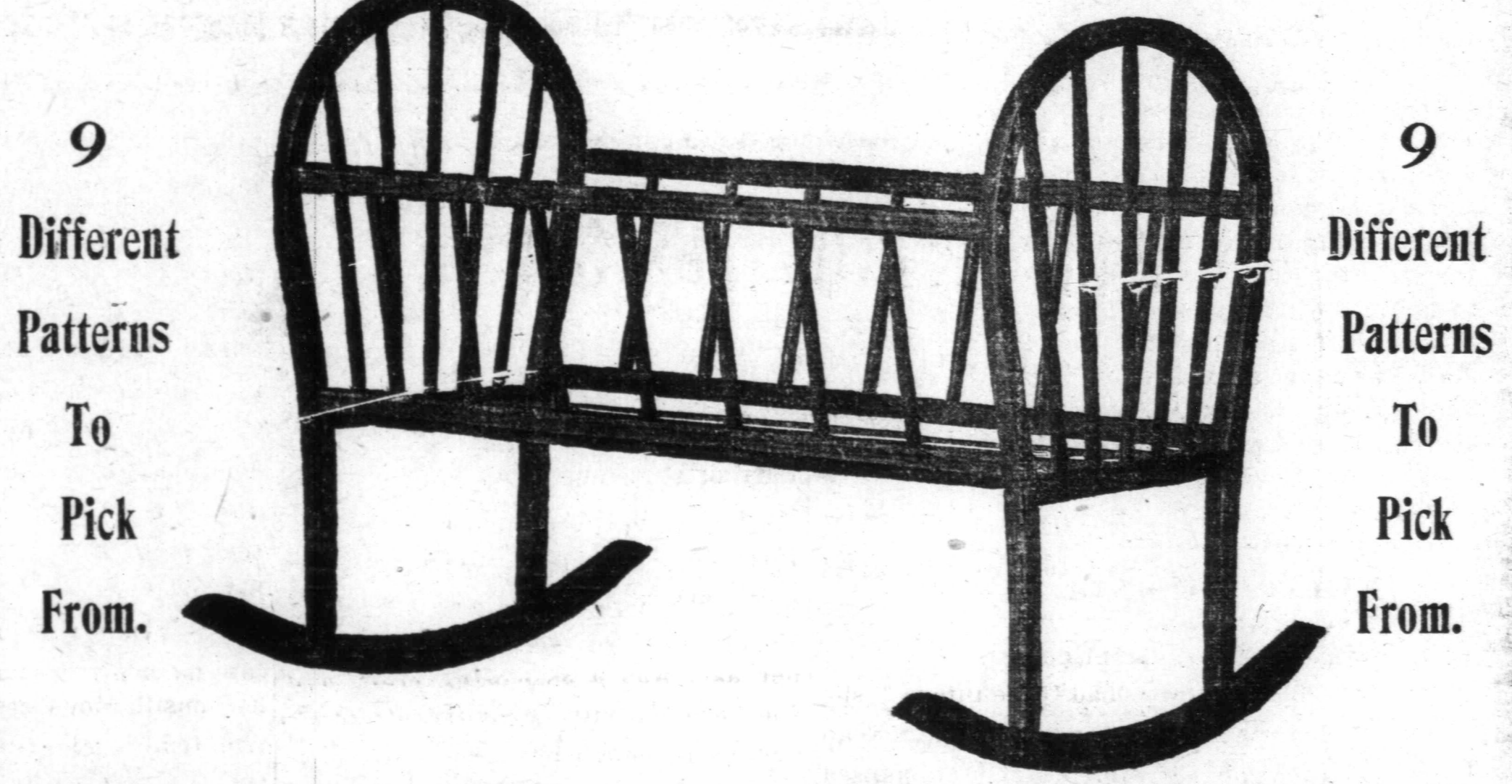
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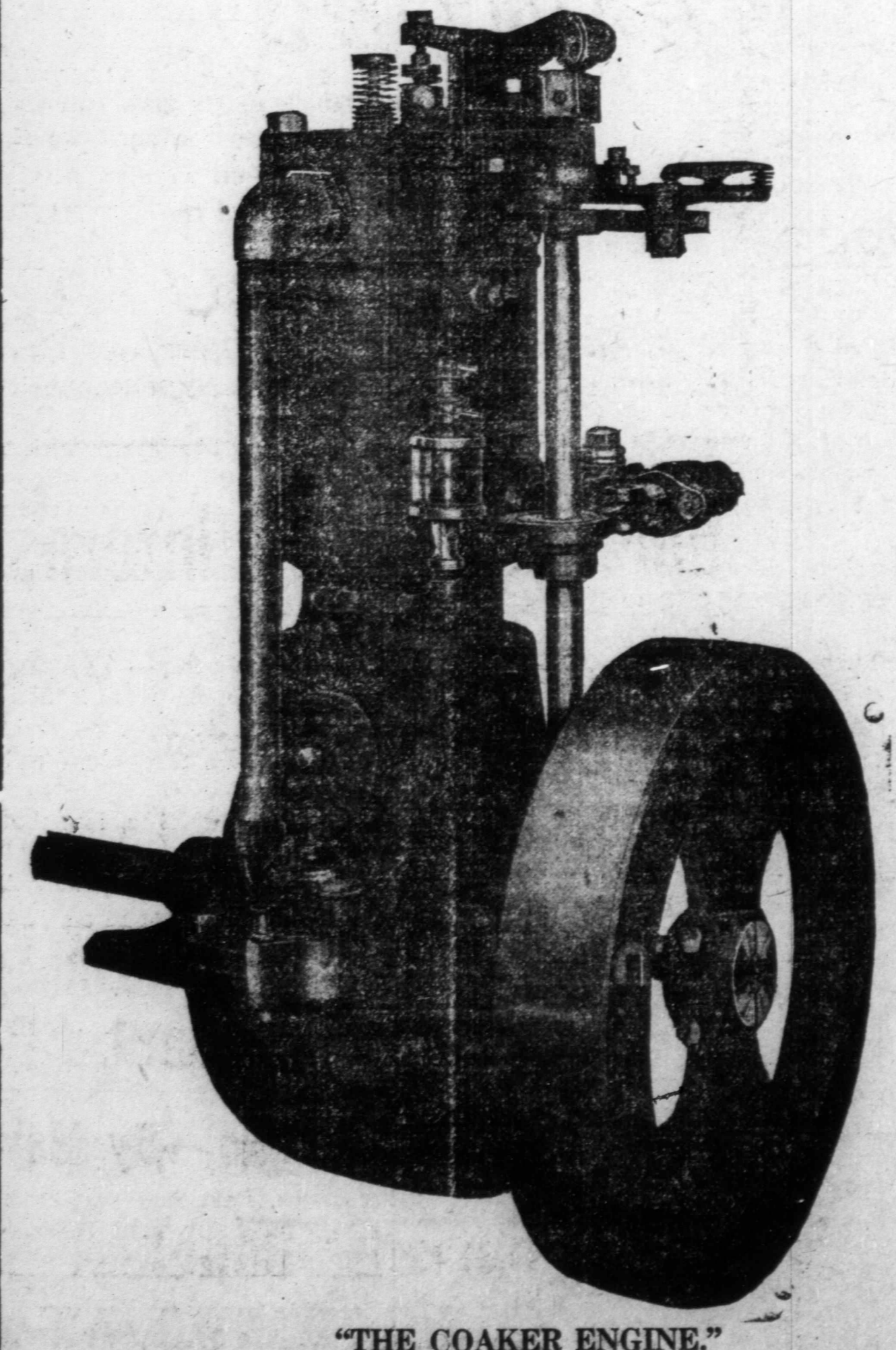


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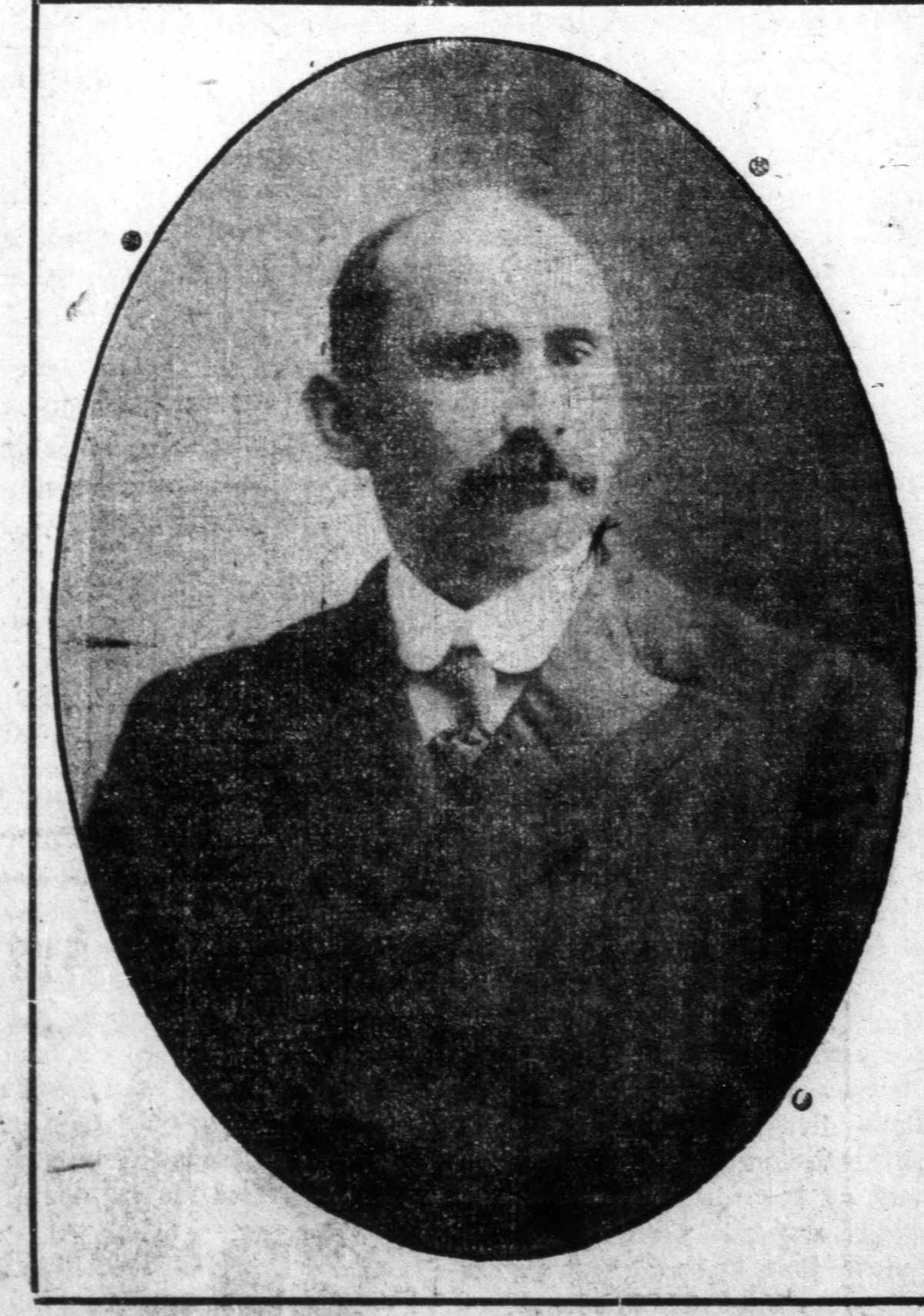


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