

Mr. BRETHEN: I understood the minister to say that this money is given to reimburse the licensees for expenditures made on the property.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Not altogether. There have been expenditures in connection with the surveys on berths proposed for exchange. These disbursements amounted to some \$22,000 and interest was allowed only on actual investment in the berth in the way of fire dues and ordinary timber charges.

Mr. BRETHEN: The initial selling price of the property in 1907 was \$40,000.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: Forty-three thousand. There has been no work on the property at all. Hon. gentlemen will see now how difficult it is for us to do anything intelligently with this vote. How many hon. members understand the issue now?

Mr. HEALY: None.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: None; there you have it. I thought the irrepressible member would interject a remark of that kind.

Mr. HEALY: It seemed clear enough to the committee until you tried to explain it.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I had expected something of such brilliancy from the hon. member, whose name will be famous in verse. But I was pointing out how ridiculous it is to expect anything like a sensible vote in this House on this question at the present time. Why, the Chairman himself (Mr. Gordon) is absolutely all wrong; and he has studied the question. He says that Sir James Lougheed came to a certain legal conclusion. But with much deference to the Chair I suggest that Sir James Lougheed never did anything of the kind; there was a total absence of anything like a legal conclusion in the matter, for all that was done to send a report to the Department of Justice. The hon. gentleman is absolutely wrong.

Mr. RAYMOND: Gently.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: What is that?

Mr. RAYMOND: I said, gently.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON: I apologize to the hon. gentleman for interrupting the current of his thoughts which I am sure must have been directed towards a proper solution of the question. This claim is not new; it is so old that it is hoary. It has been hanging fire not for months but for years and having been referred to the former government it was rejected. The Prime Minister shakes

[Mr. Gordon.]

his head. But he has not been here during this discussion and he does not know anything about it. He has never gone through the files and he does not realize that to-day he is putting through a vote of \$120,000 after the Department of Justice in two opinions has held that there is absolutely no legal liability. That is the opinion of the Department of Justice; yet here we are, in the dying days of the session, with the House knowing absolutely nothing about this matter, being asked to vote this sum of money. If the vote is passed the government must accept responsibility for jamming it through.

Mr. FORKE: When did all these negotiations take place? The matter must have been on the tapis for a long time.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Yes, ever since I became Minister of the Interior; and as hon. gentlemen have heard, it was under consideration before then.

Mr. FORKE: When was the final settlement made?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I cannot give the exact date.

Mr. FORKE: This is a hard nut for members to crack—\$120,000 to two men for a claim we know nothing about.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): I was never willing to give the amount of timber these gentlemen thought they were entitled to. I never questioned our liability to supply them with timber in lieu of their original berths, and as a matter of fact I think I have made a very much better bargain with them by retaining our timber, which will become much more valuable as time goes on. The government never likes to give back money. I have half a dozen cases of a similar character pending and it is not an easy matter adjusting these difficulties. I find it the most difficult thing to accomplish.

Mr. HOEY: Was it a private corporation that was responsible for the flooding of this district in the first place?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): It was done originally by the city of New Westminster and municipalities.

Mr. HOEY: Would you not have some claim against the city? Did litigation ever take place?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): No, it never did, because we never changed the berth.

Mr. HOEY: Are they paying part of this compensation?