

Coal Inquiry

BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS, RESTRICTED AREA

Mr. CASGRAIN:

For a copy of all letters, telegrams, petitions and other documents, in the possession of the Department of Agriculture, respecting the establishment of a restricted area for the eradication of bovine tuberculosis embracing the agricultural districts of Chicoutimi, Roberval, Charlevoix and Saguenay, from January 1, 1930, to date.

MEAT AND CANNED FOODS ACT REGULATIONS

Mr. NEILL:

For a copy of all documents, correspondence, letters, petitions and telegrams passing since September 1, 1932, between any member of the government, or official thereof, and any other government, persons, or associations in connection with the request for the change in the regulations of the Meat and Canned Foods Act which was embodied in P.C. 206 passed on February 3, 1933, whether before or after the passage of the said order in council.

NEW GOVERNMENT BUILDING

On the orders of the day:

Mr. P. F. CASGRAIN (Charlevoix-Saguenay): Mr. Speaker, may I ask the government if there is any truth in the report which appeared in the paper yesterday to the effect that the government was to begin construction of a \$5,000,000 block on Wellington street, such construction to be financed by the issue of notes?

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): Any information of that sort will be made known to the house in due course, as no action can be taken without consent of the house.

COAL INQUIRY

REPORT OF REGISTRAR ON IMPORTATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF BRITISH ANTHRACITE

On the orders of the day:

Hon. W. A. GORDON (Minister of Mines): Mr. Speaker, some days ago I intimated to the house that I had received the report of the registrar appointed under the Combines Investigation Act with respect to his inquiry into the importation and distribution of British anthracite coal into Canada. I intimated at that time that as soon as I had an opportunity to review the report I would make a statement to the house. The inquiry was set in motion by reason of a complaint made by a member of the other chamber, and was not instituted, as is usually the case, by reason of a complaint having been made by the requisite number of consumers or others interested.

[Mr. Casgrain.]

At any rate, I instructed the registrar to make an investigation or an inquiry, as the act provides. That was done, and a great deal of evidence was taken in connection with the matter. As I indicated to the house a few days ago, the practice, and in my view a very proper one, has been not to make public the findings in inquiries under the act into business concerns. The reason of course must be obvious, namely, that if it is found after inquiry that the provisions of the act have not been invaded, then it would be highly improper that the business of anyone be made known to his competitors and others. On the other hand, if it is found that the business under inquiry falls foul of the provisions of the act and it is desirable to have a further review, that further review would of course be based upon the evidence secured by the registrar or commissioner as the case may be, and if the evidence were made public it might easily defeat the objective sought.

The importation and distribution of British anthracite coal in this country has been a subject of interest for a number of years. Efforts have been made in the past to introduce that fuel into Canada because of the fact that the supply of that sort of fuel was being obtained entirely from outside our boundaries. Until 1929 those efforts were not efficacious for reasons that probably are fairly well known to members of this chamber. Beginning with 1929 the importation of British coal was apparently made possible, and today the importation of that fuel is very considerable. No question arises as to contracts made or understandings arrived at between the importers of British anthracite and their other foreign competitors, so in that respect the inquiry made by the registrar is quite different from the usual inquiry made into matters arising under the act. The question that does arise is whether or not in the formation of the organization that is distributing the British anthracite in Canada those engaged have complied with the terms of the act. Many questions of law are involved. The registrar's report indicates that the importers' net profit for the four years, 1929 to 1932 inclusive, ranged from 39 cents a ton to 64 cents a ton. The registrar also finds that there has not been a contraction of that profit in the same ratio as retailers' profits and matters of that character. He has concluded, however, that the arrangements