

MEMBERS OF SHELL COMMITTEE HELPED THEMSELVES

Awarded Fat Contracts to Companies in which They were Interested--Why Premier Borden Does not want the Probe applied.

(By H. F. Gadsby.)

Ottawa, March 16.—The expected has happened. That is to say, Premier Borden has refused a probe into the Shell Committee. His arguments were three: (1) That the old Shell Committee was so good that they had, at Messrs. Thomas's and Hicken's request, to get rid of it, (2) that it was so good that it couldn't stand an inquiry, (3) that this war is being settled in Europe and take shame of yourself for trying to start anything here.

Of course the Premier did not put his argument just that way, but that is what his statements amounted to in the long run. His speech was a notable example of great cry and little wool. From the truculence of his tone the House judged that he was going to snatch Sir Wilfrid bald-headed before he got through, instead of which he practically repeated Sir Sam's remarks of three weeks ago with a little peevishness of his own for good measure. His favorite form of challenging the leader of the Opposition was this: "When he talks about so-and-so I want to tell him, etc., etc." There's urbanity for you! The fact of the matter is adversity does not sweeten Sir Robert. Moreover, he has a weak case and he relies on indignation to pull him out. Not only does he put his foot down flat on an investigation, but he stamps on it.

Flavelle Surprised.

Mr. J. W. Flavelle, chairman of the reorganized Imperial Munitions Board, was in the gallery during most of Premier Borden's remarks, and seemed much surprised at this display of temper. Mr. Flavelle, who has a smooth and pious disposition, would never let the sun go down on his wrath that way. He would consider it bad play. Mr. Flavelle does his important work for nothing and sheer love of country. All he gets out of it is a beef contract and the more or less distant prospect of a knighthood.

Sir Wilfrid addressed himself at some length to the point made by Arthur Meighen, namely, that the money so lavishly distributed by the old Shell Committee to itself and its friends, was British money and that consequently the Canadian Parliament had nothing to do with it.

One of the great differences between Arthur Meighen and Abraham Lincoln is that Abraham was a rail-splitter and Arthur is a hair splitter. This last hair Arthur will have to split all over again because Sir Wilfrid proved to the satisfaction of all reasonable minds that the money spent by the old Shell Committee was just as much Canadian money as it was British, since Sir Thomas White had admitted that there would be an accounting after the war and that Canada would pay her share of the munitions purchased by the British Government in Canada. Sir Wilfrid put two and two together.

When it comes to foaming, the self-blitz powder has nothing on Premier Borden. He made a point that Sir Wilfrid's justifiable reflections on profiteering were "aspersions on the manufacturers of Canada." Now what do you think of that? Whatever happens, Premier Borden is going to keep warm with the manufacturers.

Those Time Fuses.

Another matter touched by Sir Wilfrid was what a poet might call Sam Hughes's time fuses, for which the shells were kept waiting more than a year while thousands of Canadian soldiers were slain and battles lost or not followed up because they had nothing to fight back with, shells without time fuses being about as useful as heads without brains.

When D. A. Thomas paid his famous visit to Canada, this country, owing to the lack of time fuses, had made good on shell orders and deliveries only to the extent of two per cent. This rate was afterwards speeded up, but Canada is still 75 per cent. behind the schedule and stands little chance of getting more shell orders from England until she catches up. One reason for the delay was no time fuses, the other exigencies of the patronage list

which did not look with favor on any shell makers but Conservative ones. As afterwards pointed out by Mr. Carvell, the Canadian General Electric Co., which at the very start of the war had offered to produce 100,000 shells a month, was turned down because its party complexion was not right and even now it can boast of nothing but a measly order for 25,000 shells.

Meanwhile the old Shell Committee was handing it out gaily to its friends and whenever a case of doubt arose, helping itself to contracts at anywhere from 100 to 300 per cent. profit.

More than that, although Sir Sam gives a vague denial, it included in the price the 24 cents royalty per shell to the firm of Krupp, and this aided and comforted the enemy to the extent of \$700,000.

Elusive Colonel Allison.

Incidentally Sir Wilfrid paid his compliments to Colonel John Wesley Allison, Sir Sam's justly celebrated money-saver, who has never yet faced the Public Accounts Committee.

"A colonel," said Sir Wilfrid, "who never smelt gunpowder in his life except when there was money in it, except when there was a profit in it."

Outside of rebukes to Sir Wilfrid and other members of the Opposition for daring to have minds of their own when they saw the dollars going astray, Sir Robert Borden devoted the most of his time to defending the old Shell Committee. He produced a letter from an anonymous mechanical engineer who said that the Shell Committee had done wonderful things. So it had—not only wonderful, but appalling.

He repeated the National Policy part of Sir Sam's last speech. When he came to the visit of Lloyd George's ambassadors extraordinary, Messrs. D. A. Thomas and Hichens, he talked a little more rapidly, and repeated the old explanation that the Shell Committee had got past the experimental stage and become so expert in awarding contracts and handling a sum of money equal to twice the annual revenue of Canada that it had to be removed to another sphere of action.

Quit the Job.

Sir Robert produced character evidence from Messrs. Thomas and Hichens, who were anxious to let the old Shell Committee out with as little fuss as possible, but he did not produce the minutes of the last meeting of the Shell Committee, which would have given another color to the story. In that famous but mysterious document the Shell Committee washes its hands of the prices fixed for shells by Messrs. Thomas and Hichens, and quits the job.

Although many shell makers have taken contracts since at the Thomas prices, and made good profits, the British idea of a fair profit did not commend itself to the old Shell Committee.

At all events, Premier Borden, under pressure from Messrs. Thomas and Hichens, consented to a reorganization of the Shell Committee.

Hence the Imperial Munitions Board with J. W. Flavelle, the boss efficiency man, at its head. The other members were also nominated by Premier Borden, but as Mr. Flavelle is a great man for having his own way, they don't cut much figure. Premier Borden's last word is that the old Shell Committee was "doing fine." Doing whom? Doing Great Britain.

Carvell's Good Work.

Frank Carvell did a good night's work. At the first crack out of the box he succeeded in ruffling Oly Wilcox, who shouted "rot" and was disciplined by the Speaker. R. R. Bennett also showed a disposition to bite, and when he could stand it no longer, left the chamber. As a budding cabinet minister R. B. takes all these challenges to himself.

Mr. Carvell's main contention was that as Canada before the war is over will have perhaps one-fifteenth of the Empire's troops at the front and one-tenth of the munition factories, and as she will have to pay for her share of the ammunition bought in Canada

ELECTION BILL DISCUSSED IN THE LOCAL LEGISLATURE

The Legislature met at 3 o'clock on Thursday.

Mr. Pelletier gave notice of enquiry respecting the present number of employees in the Agricultural Department and as to the amounts that the Province has been called upon to pay upon its guarantee of bonds in respect of the Southampton Railway, the Northern N. B. and Seaboard Railway, and the St. John & Quebec Railway.

Mr. Grimmer presented the petition of the Town of Milltown in favor of a bill to authorize the town to issue debentures.

Mr. Carter presented the petition of M. J. Wright and others in favor of a bill to permit of the sale of the Union Hall in the village of Andover.

Mr. Glazier introduced a bill to enable the County Council of the Municipality of Sunbury to make temporary loans.

Hon. Mr. Morrissey introduced a bill to authorize the Bishop of Chatham to dispose of lands at Bathurst, in the County of Gloucester, and in the Parish of Ludlow, in the County of Northumberland.

Hon. Mr. Baxter introduced a bill to amend the Municipalities Act.

Crown Land Grants.

The House then went into committee, Mr. Young in the chair, and took up the further consideration of a bill respecting grants of Crown Lands.

This bill provides that in case any applicant for a grant of land under the Labor Act who has partially performed the conditions of settlement, and then enlisted for overseas service, shall not suffer by reason of the conditions not having been complied with within the allotted time. The bill was amended to include settlers on the Blue Bell Tract, and then agreed to.

The Election Law.

The committee then took up for further consideration the Elections bill.

Hon. Mr. Baxter said that under the present law there were three qualifications, real estate, personal estate and manhood suffrage. In view of the latter there appeared to be no sufficient reason for retaining the two former. The present bill provided for one qualification only, manhood suffrage. The others were out of date. Another provision permitted soldiers who were not of age or otherwise not on the election list at the time they went to war, to vote at any election after their return on making application stating that they had been on active service and giving the unit to which they had been attached. It seemed to him to be unfair that these men should have to wait to go through the usual formality which the ordinary voter had to.

Mr. Lockhart said the present seemed to be a very opportune time to consider the question whether the ladies shouldn't have a vote. Provision appeared to have been made for every class of voter but the ladies, and he thought they were just as well able to vote intelligently as the majority of the other sex.

The Truth Will Out.

Some hon. member—"We have trouble enough now as it is, without looking for more."

Mr. Slipp thought that three months residence in an electoral district should be sufficient to qualify a voter. He thought six months was too long, but his suggestion didn't seem to meet

by the British government, it is only reasonable that the operations of the old Shell Committee shall be investigated.

Good to Itself.

Perhaps the most interesting part of Mr. Carvell's speech was where he showed how good the old Shell Committee was to itself.

General Bertram's companies—Gen. Bertram was chairman of the Shell Committee—got \$1,500,000 in contracts on which there was a presumable profit of \$800,000; the Universal Tool Steel Company, George Watt's protégé, got \$1,700,000, probable profit \$900,000; the Electrical Steel and Metal Co., David Carnegie's spoiled child, got \$1,800,000, probable profit \$1,000,000; and the Nova Scotia Steel Co., Col. Cantley's pet, got \$15,000,000 on which you can figure out the profits for yourself taking care to compare the company's rather finished balance sheet for 1915 with the swollen statement for 1916.

Another statement of Mr. Carvell's was that the Steel Metal Products Co., of which the Hon. A. E. Kemp, member of the government, is president, got a contract for \$300,000. This will take some explaining.

with much favor, and was not adopted.

Mr. B. F. Smith thought that some provision should be made for putting the names of new voters on the lists, and taking off names which had no right to be there except at the meetings of the revisors.

Hon. Mr. Baxter said that if the board of revisors was composed of members of both political parties matters should be satisfactory, because one side would see that the other did not take advantage. It might, however, so happen that all the members of the board were of one shade of political opinion and there might be a disposition in that case to get ahead of their opponents if possible. Inasmuch as the provincial electoral lists were the basis of the Dominion lists, they should be compiled with greatest care.

Mr. Smith's View.

Mr. B. F. Smith, while agreeing with the Attorney General, said that he was equally unwilling to deprive any young fellow of his right to vote, a result which must frequently happen if the system now proposed was adopted. If the revisors were properly paid they possibly might do their work a little more thoroughly, but he was afraid that unless some provision was made by which the names of qualified voters could be got onto the lists without application being formally made to the revisors' court in the first instance, many young men would be disfranchised.

Hon. Mr. Baxter could not think that the members of the political parties in the province were so indolent that they would not take steps to see that the names of new voters were placed upon the lists in the interests of their parties. As a rule, when a young man's political sympathies were known the party agents were only too glad to get him put on the list.

After some slight further discussion the section was amended to permit of the revisors accepting any evidence of which they might be possessed, upon which to add new names to the list.

Progress was then reported.

Hon. Dr. Landry presented the report of the Auditor General on Public Accounts, which on his motion was referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

The House adjourned at 5 p. m.

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IRISH COLLEENS TO AID RECRUITING

(Canadian Press)

Toronto, Ont., March 15.—One hundred fair Irish colleens will act as recruiting sergeants on the streets tomorrow, the 17th of Ireland, for the 268th Irish Fusiliers. These bewitching recruiters will be distributed over the forty districts with an automobile for each district, and when the charms catch a recruit, they will lure him to the car and having "delivered the goods," will go flirting with the next eligible who comes along. It is presumed that many an undecided one will be brought to a decision when an Irish girl "pops the question," which is her privilege during leap year.

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