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ON PARLIAMENT HILL

OTTAWA, May 30, 1925.—Events within the precincts of the Parliament Buildings but outside the House of Commons itself furnished more interest this week than developments in the legislative chamber. One of these was the notable dinner tendered on Wednesday evening in the Parliamentary Restaurant by the Liberal members of the House and the other was the testimony given to the Special House Committee on ocean rates control by Sir William Petersen, the widely known British shipowner with whom the Dominion Government proposes to enter into a contract for a subsidized Atlantic service under Government control of rates. In the early part of the week some important pieces of Government legislation were introduced and given a start on their way to final passage and treatment in the Senate.

BANQUET TO PREMIER KING

At the Liberal dinner two or three things were made abundantly manifest. One is that the Prime Minister of Canada has the cordial and solid support of Liberals throughout the Dominion. Another fact upon which the King Administration is much stronger today than when it came into power a little over four years ago, and this in spite of all handicaps. As was eloquently stated by George M. Kite, Chief Liberal Whip, when he acted as toastmaster, the Liberals when they came into power were given a majority of only one in the House, but on important divisions this session has never fallen below 38 while the maximum was 121. Both Premier Mackenzie King and Mr. Kite, as well as some other speakers, notably W. D. Euler (N. Waterloo), and W. C. Raymond (Brantford), made it plain that the reason for this remarkable increase in the strength of the Liberal Party lies in the fact that the legislation it has from time to time submitted to Parliament and succeeded in getting into the statute books has appealed to men of fair and independent thinking and has had for its purpose the service of the needs of the whole country, as opposed to any particular section. The character of these legislative deeds has had its origin, largely, in the determination of the Prime Minister to do all in his power to more closely knit together the various sections of the country and remove as far as possible the geographical barriers that otherwise divide this country.

RECORD OF THE GOVERNMENT

In an illuminating and convincing speech the Prime Minister at the dinner pointed with pride to the fact that since his Government took over the reins of power there has been nothing heard of sectional discord and that today the close national unity as regards races, creeds and geographical divisions was due very largely to the kindlier feelings engendered by the policy of the present Administration. Again, the relations of Canada with the other parts of the world had been vastly bettered as a result of the external policy of the King Government, the national debt had been reduced, the taxation had been cut, industrial development had been stimulated and there had come a remarkable growth in this Dominion's export trade, a growth never before approached.

SIR WM. PETERSEN MAKES OUT GOOD CASE

After many, many days of taking evidence from shippers in Canada

and from the member companies of the North Atlantic Conference the Special House Committee on Thursday had before it for the first time as a witness. Sir William Petersen and the impression he made upon that body in the first day's testimony was highly favorable. A good natured burly Englishman with a remarkable grasp of the whole intricate business of ocean transportation Sir William quickly transformed the impression sedulously cultivated by the combine representatives and by the Conservative press that he was some predatory evil genius into a more generous impression of him as an exceedingly reasonable man who has placed all his cards on the table and has disclosed every single piece of information sought by the committee. This, by the way, is in pleasing contrast to the great difficulty experienced in extracting facts and figures from the representatives of the Conference.

The Conference has contended in its defence against the charges that as a combine it has kept rates far too high and made more than a fair profit thereby and also stifled all competition by independent concerns that it has not made profits, that the rates are not too high, that they are not high enough, but in their defence when declaring that their has been an unprofitable business they have been very reluctant to make frank statements when questioned closely as to their financial showings. In fact, in the case of two Conference lines—White Star-Dominion and the Cunard—no information whatever has been obtainable from them.

AGREES TO CHARGES IN CONTRACT

Sir William Petersen, on the other hand, has stated frankly and without hesitation every fact pertinent to the inquiry and the figures showing; how much more economically than the Conference boasts his vessels can be and are operated have been staggering to the Conference representatives and up to now their counsel has not made any progress towards offsetting Sir William's evidence. He has conclusively demonstrated to the committee that the type of ships which he proposes to place at the disposal of the Dominion Government in return for a subsidy can be operated at a remarkably lower cost than the Conference boats; that he can cut operating costs by at least one-third. In his testimony before the Committee on Thursday he even offered to forego the subsidy of \$275,000, pound sterling annually for the ten years

of the proposed contract if he were guaranteed his operating expenses, fixed charges and a reasonable profit. He also offered quite freely to allow certain important changes in the draft agreement to meet criticisms heard in the House in the first debate on the scheme, changes that would really make the conditions upon him even more onerous. It is now apparent that the case for the Government in this proposal has been greatly strengthened by Sir William's testimony and by the frank, clear and ready manner in which he has given it to the Committee.

LEGISLATIVE EVENTS OF THE WEEK

During the week some amending legislation has been introduced by various Ministers. The Criminal Code is to be altered to check the evil of handbook betting. There are to be changes in the Canada Temperance Act to enable the provinces more effectively to enforce their own laws. The Customs Act is to be amended to check smuggling by making it an indictable offence to smuggle goods of over \$200 value. Also false billing in freight cars, a practice of rum runners, will be made more perilous by an amendment to the 1919 Railway Act introduced by Hon. George P. Graham, Minister of Railways and Canals.

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