

ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE AGAIN STIFLES INQUIRY

Upholds Mr. Taylor in His Refusal to Answer Questions

PROUDFOOT FORCED TO END EXAMINATION

Interesting Disclosures in Connection With Nipissing Ball Team

Although the Prime Minister admitted in the House that money had been received from a contractor as a campaign contribution, the Public Accounts Committee yesterday stubbornly refused to allow any investigation on that point in respect of the contract of Taylor, Scott & Co. Mr. George E. Taylor was again called to testify, but Mr. Proudfoot had scarcely started with his examination when Mr. Taylor balked.

Before any evidence was taken by the committee a long discussion arose between the Chairman, Mr. Rowell and Mr. Proudfoot over the propriety of the committee's action last Friday. Mr. Ferguson said he had consulted precedents and had found that the committee had a right to rule out evidence, but that motions would be entered in the minutes. Mr. Elliott argued that a motion appertaining to a question was useless unless the question involved was shown.

"Did anyone at one of these interviews try to get you to retract a statement that you had made against a certain member of the Government in consideration of the submission to arbitration being gone on with?" asked Mr. Proudfoot, to start the ball rolling.

Mr. Taylor objected, producing his subpoena from the committee, and claimed that he was only called to testify with regard to the payment of \$21,000.

"You understand the question I asked you?"

"I did."

"What do you say to that question, that you decline to answer?"

"I do not know that I am called upon to answer that question."

"You are here now, Mr. Taylor, and I presume you are bound to answer any question which the committee may consider relevant. Do I understand that you refuse to answer that question?"

"I Will Not Answer."

"I will not answer that question," replied the witness.

On Mr. Proudfoot's appeal to Chairman Ferguson, the Chairman said that question had been settled on Friday. It had no direct bearing on the item and the witness should not be required to answer. The committee had the same situation to meet with Mr. McGuigan.

Trying again, Mr. Proudfoot asked: "Was the submission to arbitration allowed or made in pursuance of any retraction on your part?"

"Do you mean I was to retract anything I said," queried Mr. Taylor.

"Yes."

"No, sir."

"Were you asked to retract?"

"Was I asked to retract what?"

"Were you asked to retract a statement you made with reference to a member of the Government?"

"I will not answer that."

The Chairman again stopped the questions. He did not think it was necessary to compel the witness to answer. Words were often used in

heat that afterwards had not better be repeated. An appeal was taken to the committee and the ruling that the question was irrelevant was sustained by a vote of nine to five.

Then the matter of political contribution came up. "Did you make a contribution to the Conservative party or any member of the Government for political purposes?"

That Campaign Money.

"I ruled upon that Friday," interrupted Mr. Ferguson.

"In view of the statement of the Prime Minister yesterday I thought the witness would be inclined to answer it now," explained Mr. Proudfoot. "The witness has not said whether he will answer it or not."

"A question once declared irrelevant cannot be put again," said Mr. McGarry.

"I think in view of what happened yesterday a different construction might be put on it."

"This committee is a law unto itself," was the remark of the Chairman.

"Was the question of a political contribution discussed between you and any member of the Government," asked Mr. Proudfoot, with continued persistence, "at the time you were arranging this arbitration?"

Mr. Ferguson — That is the same question in another form.

Mr. Proudfoot—No, it is an entirely different question.

"Mr. Taylor, at any of these interviews leading up to the submission of this question to arbitration, was the question of how a certain coal contract had been awarded discussed?" was another poser from Mr. Proudfoot.

"I object to that question; it is not relevant," was Mr. McGarry's quick reply.

"In view of the position taken by a majority of the committee and yourself, Mr. Chairman, I decline to further prosecute this examination. It is quite clear it is useless to attempt to do so to get at what I believe to be the root of the whole transaction," was Mr. Proudfoot's parting shot.

A motion by the Liberals to send an interim report to the House was voted down on an amendment by Mr. McGarry that the committee proceed with the examination of witnesses and then make a final report.

Railway's Baseball Team.

Further investigation into the pay rolls of the Nipissing Central Railway disclosed the interesting information that Mr. Kenneth McDonald, Superintendent, is a baseball magnate in the making. It appeared from the evidence of Frank Leslie, conductor on the line, that McDonald owns a baseball park at Haileybury and manages a semi-professional team. Most of these men work on the railway and play ball in the summer, drawing full pay.

"Do you know of any work being done on these grounds by the employees of the company?" asked Mr. Elliott.

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"I was there myself."

"By whom were you paid for the time you put in there?"

"It came from the Nipissing Central."

"Under whose instructions?"

"Instructions of McDonald."

Mr. Leslie went on to say that several members of the baseball team whom he knew were employees of the company and drew pay at the rate of \$3.50 per day. He also said that members of the team were carried free on the railway under orders from the Superintendent.

Questioned regarding the sale of junk, Mr. Elliott asked: "Do you know anything about the sale of goods of the company—copper wire being sold as junk?"

"Not within those dates," he replied, referring to the fiscal year of 1911-12.

Mr. Harold Finlay, manager for the storekeeper Lillie, said he had received pay cheques for his employees in payment of goods purchased for the railway. This was often done, he said.