

DEMAND AN AUDIT OF KAPUSKASING STORE ACCOUNTS

Allegations of Mismanagement and Overcharges Made by G.A.C. Official.

COLONY BUYER TESTIFIES

Says Settlers Were Charged on Cost Basis Plus Trans- portation.

Complaints of mismanagement at the Government store at Kapuskasing and that the supplies were purchased in the dearest market and sold above ordinary retail prices, were voiced this morning by settlers, before the commission now enquiring into conditions at the Soldiers' Settlement in the north country.

Mr. A. E. D. Bruce, secretary of the Northern Development Branch of the Department of Lands, Forests and Mines, and buyer for the Government store at **Kapuskasing**, was the first witness. Mr. Bruce stated that prices charged were based on costs plus transportation charges.

Prices for Staple Goods.

Quoting from the list sent him on January 28, 1920, by the storekeeper, he said prices for some staple articles sold at the store were: Flour, \$6.25 bag, (Toronto price \$10); potatoes, \$2.50 bag, (Toronto price \$4.25 to \$4.75); granulated sugar, 13½ cents, (Toronto price now 18 cents); brown sugar 13 cents; shortening 32 cents; lard 35 cents; coal oil 35 cents; bacon 46 cents; sliced bacon 50 cents; sirloin steak 28 cents; brisket beef 18 cents; roast rib 22 cents; round steak 25 cents; stewing beef 19 cents; butter 72 cents; cheese 33 cents. No advance had been made on flour or potatoes, he said, and the price for sugar did not pay for putting it up.

Questioned as to the mode of buying beef, Mr. Bruce said quotations were procured weekly from two or more of the wholesale houses in Toronto. A quantity of meat had been spoiled in transit and the Harris Abattoir Co. had made an allowance for same. "This meat had not been offered for sale in the store," witness said.

Turnover Was \$90,000.

"What was your turnover in 1918?" asked the chairman, W. F. Nickle, K. C.

"About \$90,000," was the reply.

"Do you follow the market price or the cost price in fixing your price?"

"We follow the price we pay."

"Do you buy from the wholesaler or the jobber?" "From the wholesaler and manufacturer wherever possible."

Witness stated that requisitions from the camp were never changed at this end, but were always filled. The profit for the year was between \$4,000 and \$5,000, but this would be absorbed if cost of delivery, rent and heating were deducted.

Rotten Apples and Dear Beef.

A. S. Morgan, secretary of the Kapuskasing post, G.A.C., complained that when he had asked for apples at the store the manager said:

"We have apples but we cannot sell them as we have not received the invoice." Although he had offered five cents each for a dozen this offer was refused. "When the invoice arrived the apples were rotten."

He claimed that he could have bought better beef at 11 cents in North Bay, and that large quantities of beef had been burned at the colony. He also declared he had bought better quality bacon in Toronto and retailed it on the side to settlers for five cents a pound less than the colony store price.

"That's right—I bought some from him," interjected Mrs. D. Precious.

"The whole trouble is they buy in the dearest market," added Morgan.

Mr. Bruce: "We cannot have a man going round buying eggs from farmers like the Davies people do."

"It would pay you," responded Morgan.

H. McLeod, treasurer of the G. A. C., alleging mismanagement at the store, demanded an independent audit of the store accounts since its inception. He wanted to find out exactly the quantity of goods that had been destroyed.

Mrs. Precious asked why there should be three prices for moccasins. She asserted that \$2.50, \$1.80 and \$2 had been charged to various settlers for the same thing.

"There should not be a spread like that is the answer is it not, Mr. Bruce?" asked the chairman. "Yes," replied Mr. Bruce.

The Commission adjourned for lunch.