

in warehouses and elevators might also have been investigated.

The Government should have held back what was required of those staple commodities for the people, set a price on them, and allow the rest to be exported to our allies. What is the present situation regarding potatoes? They are selling to-day in Montreal at \$4.00 a bag, and of this the farmer gets only \$1.75 to \$2.00. I myself bought them in the country at \$2.00 a bag when they fetched \$4.00 in the city.

At the beginning of the war, especially last year, it was the Government's duty, as they saw prices soaring all the time, to at once lay an embargo on those commodities, and to withhold from exportation a sufficient quantity to meet the needs of the community. The farmers are not the only ones to be considered; but one must also take into account the workingman, the under-paid or small earner, who do not hope to see their salaries keep pace with the ever-increasing cost of living. You failed to do so; the city of Montreal entreated the Government to commandeer these commodities, and the Government had not the pluck to do so. As to the coal situation, again I say that the minister wired me at the last minute, stating that coal was selling in Ottawa at \$8 a ton and asking whether it was true that \$14 to \$15 was asked for them in Montreal, and if so, to let him know immediately. I replied to the Minister; I did every thing possible under the circumstances and I find it strange that the minister should now see fit to cast any blame on us.

There is another point I should like to deal with before I take my seat. The Government has lately passed an Order in Council providing for the free entry of wheat. In 1911, I was in favour of reciprocity, but it seems to me that to-day is not the time to apply it without at least taking steps to keep enough wheat in the country to feed our families and ensure cheap bread instead of helping to increase the price. It is a move merely to catch the western farmer's vote, as can be seen by the statement in the Order in Council to the effect that the measure is intended to secure a better price for Canadian wheat. Here again, I claim, it is not the farmer who will reap the greatest share, but, as was said a moment ago by the hon. member for St. John, N.B., the speculator who has stored the grain of the western prairies in order to enhance the price through exportation into the United States. I say that here again a state of things is created which tends to raise the

price of commodities; and so much is that the case, that since the Order in Council has been passed, the price of a certain quality of bread in Montreal has been raised from one to two cents since yesterday.

The Government has always been keen on unloading its blunders not only on the corporation of Montreal, but in all important centres it has been anxious to shift responsibility for its action on the shoulders of the provincial governments, as was instanced by the speech of the Minister of Labour this evening. As a parting word, let me tell him that he has not worked in the interest of the people at large, or of the city and towns in particular, but has always favoured the trusts, of which he is the protector and friend.

Mr. CROTHERS: I regret that I did not follow very closely what the hon. member (Mr. Martin) said, but I assume that he was discussing the cost of living. I had the honour and pleasure of spending a day in Montreal some months ago, and the hon. gentleman, as mayor, treated me like a prince. He spent nearly the whole day with me, and there was nothing in Montreal too good for me. And all the time I was with him he did not say anything about the high cost of anything we ate or drank.

Mr. MARTIN: Did the hon. gentleman say it was a few weeks ago?

Mr. CROTHERS: About a year ago.

Mr. MARTIN: On Labour Day?

Mr. CROTHERS: Yes.

Mr. MARTIN: That was not the time. The war—

Mr. CROTHERS: We had had war for a couple of years then, and the hon. gentleman did not say a word. We noticed in the press a few months ago that coal was selling in Montreal at very high prices—\$15 a ton in the centre of the city, and \$20 a ton in the suburbs. I did not wait to write to the mayor, but sent him a telegram, asking as to the facts. And, if I remember well, the hon. gentleman (Mr. Martin) wrote back stating that it was true. So, I wrote that the best thing he could do was to send a solicitor to represent the city corporation, and we would help him to deal with the matter. But the mayor did not send anybody, he did not give us a chance to help him, and I took the matter up without hearing from Montreal.