

could have done much more, and that at the present time he can, and should, do much more.

Orders in council were passed almost overnight, and this is still being done. Yesterday we had evidence which would seem to indicate that one minister passed an order in council which another minister seemed to know nothing about. Apparently it is quite easy to slide them through. How about passing an order in council cutting postal rates back to the pre-war basis. It is about time that consideration was given to that, and that we stopped talking about a false surplus. A reduction of the kind I have suggested would help everyone to meet the higher costs of living. No one would complain, because it would affect the purse of every man who has to pay ten cents more for a pound of butter.

Particularly let us make a real effort to cut in half postal rates on food parcels being sent to Britain. A surplus of \$42 million has accumulated in a department which I always thought was supposed to be a non-profit branch of government; at least that has been my understanding of it in my years in the House of Commons. I may be wrong, but that has been my impression. If that \$42 million is included in the \$300 million surplus, then I say it is time to hand out a portion of it to the people by way of a return to pre-war postage rates.

Hon. members have noted the effort being made by Ontario in connection with flood relief, one of the most worthy projects that could have been undertaken. I wonder if, just for once, the federal government could not take a lead from Ontario. The province is doing a real job in this respect, and I suggest that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) confer with the Postmaster General (Mr. Bertrand) to see if something could not be done along the lines I have suggested. Let us share some of that \$42 million of accumulated surplus with our friends in Britain who are starving themselves in an effort to feed starving humanity in Europe. If that effort were made, we would certainly be doing nothing wrong, and at the same time we would help our own people by permitting them to return to a pre-war basis for postage. I believe any effort on our part to allocate some of this accumulated money for the purpose of sending things at cheaper rates to the people in Britain would be commended by people throughout the country.

There is one further point I should like to discuss in some detail. Yesterday the Minister of Reconstruction and Supply (Mr. Howe) announced in the house that the government agency to provide housing for veterans has

[Mr. Lockhart.]

largely failed. I would ask any hon. member this question: What is the poor veteran going to do? Speaking in a jocular fashion, the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Mackenzie) said he intended to subpoena someone to attend before the public accounts committee. I am going to hold a public meeting on the ground where forty veterans homes have been constructed, and I am wondering whether I might subpoena the minister to come down to see what the actual situation is. Some hon. member suggests that perhaps we could take the public accounts committee there and have a meeting. That might be a good idea. However, we shall have a meeting there one of these week-ends and get to the bottom of this thing. I gave the details to the minister and I must say that he appears to be trying to do all that is fair. Today I received a communication that the matter will be followed through carefully.

If these government agencies have failed, what has the veteran left to turn to? Some of our hon. friends to my left here talk about free enterprise. If they had a chance to get behind free enterprise and free enterprise is given the proper opportunity to do the job, it should be given a chance to show what it can do.

Mr. NICHOLSON: Who is stopping them?

Mr. LOCKHART: I am putting it up to the government. If the members of the C.C.F. had their way it would be certainly stopped. The veteran must have some help. The distribution of building materials is wrong. I want to say a word to the minister of reconstruction about the distribution of certain materials. The minister told us some weeks ago that the supply of nails in the country was about equal to the demand. I suppose he was referring to the nails being produced by Canadian manufacturers. I am sure the house will be astounded when I tell it that from October 1, 1946, to March 31, 1947, a total of 32,487 kegs of nails was imported into Canada from the United States. Those were in addition to the production which the minister stated was nearly equal to the demand. The value of those nails was \$266,825, or approximately \$8.20 per keg of 100 pounds.

I ask any hon. member to go back home and talk to his veteran friends who are trying to build homes for themselves through private contractors, perhaps doing some of the work themselves. He will find that these men are being handicapped because they cannot get lumber or nails. Last Saturday afternoon I visited an area where at least forty veterans who had saved their money were trying to