

end of April, and if we did not adopt this recommendation now the gentlemen referred to in the report might possibly lose some of the advance to which they are entitled, I trust that there will be no objection to adopting the motion of the honourable the leader of the Government.

The motion was agreed to.

THE SHORTAGE OF COAL.

Hon. H. W. RICHARDSON: With the leave of the Senate, before we adjourn, I wish to say that this country is in a very difficult position with regard to transportation and the coal supply. I have lately been associated with coal men of the United States and transportation men of this country, and I commence to realize the gravity of the situation. Never before in the history of this country has anything like the present condition existed. To-day we are facing a coal famine, which would mean almost the complete stoppage of transportation; we are struggling to move our supplies; we are weeks behind with our shipments; we have had to cancel a certain number of our passenger trains, at which the public did not demur, realizing the gravity of the situation. Ontario, unfortunately, has to depend on the United States for its coal supply. At the present time the mines in the United States are working to the limit. In the past the mines were able to supply the demands of the trade. The demands, however, have increased wonderfully. Factories that were working eight hours a day are now working twenty-four hours a day, and new factories have been established. Railroads that were able to operate and to transport the products of those factories are not able to transport three times that production, as we have it to-day. You can see how this has exhausted the coal supply of the country. Then, too, the wages of the operators on the railroads, the cost of steel, the cost of ties, the cost of spikes, and so on, have increased so enormously that the railroads have not been able to keep up their equipment.

In our country we have three or four lines of railway. We all know how they are prospering. There is not an hon. gentleman here who has not a full knowledge of the prosperity of our railroads. Take the Grand Trunk Railway; the English capitalists have never received one cent for their money. Take our own Intercolonial Railway: year after year it has shown a

deficit. And last year we had the Canadian Northern Railway coming before us asking for help to tide them over. There must be a cause for all this, and the cause is largely that the railroads are not receiving sufficient from the people for the freight they are carrying. If we do nothing but stand still here and watch these railroads with their extra cost of maintenance and with the same old rates, we shall soon see them in bankruptcy; there is nothing else for it. Not one of us who goes into a store to-day demurs at paying the shopkeeper twenty-five to fifty per cent more for goods, because we know they are costing more; but we do not extend the same treatment to the railway companies.

It is useless for me to speak to you, honourable gentlemen, unless I have some solution to offer. The railways in the West have experienced unusually severe weather, and the cost of operating has increased at least 40 per cent. They have to move their coal supply, and that necessitates unshipping goods that need to be moved. Grain has to remain until they are able to ship it. The cost of coal is enormous. Only last week one railroad out of Toronto paid \$8.50 a ton for five cars of coal. A shipment of coal crossed to Cobourg the other day and the railroads gobbled it all up. One railroad in our country has contracted with the mines in Pennsylvania for two hundred tons of coal at \$4.16 at the mines; adding \$1.25 for freight to Suspension Bridge brings this coal to \$5.41, and further freight charges of \$2 or \$2.50 have to be paid before this coal can be used by that railroad. The Canadian Northern is bringing coal from Fort William to Montreal, and our Government railroad is doing practically the same thing. The coal at Lethbridge is coming east to Winnipeg. I think the situation is serious enough for our intervention—if we can intervene—and the only means that I see of getting over this stoppage of transportation is to order the railroads to purchase sufficient coal, irrespective of cost, to operate their roads. At the same time we can assist them by allowing an increase of 7½ per cent on the present freight rates to compensate them for the loss sustained, owing to the unusual condition of affairs caused by the war. This increase of rates would only last until normal conditions are resumed.

Hon. Mr. CASGRAIN: I think the honourable gentleman has put the situation very well; but at the beginning he said that the railroads were doing more busi-