

effective than the public opposition of co-operations, however, is the secret policy and retail men in refusing to sell goods to co-operative societies. The wholesalers are much a course of action by the attitude of the retailers, but it is well-known to co-operators that the difficulty experienced by co-operative societies in Canada is occasioned by the secret underground that exists amongst retailers that co-operative societies are not desirable from the retailer's point of view and are to be discouraged by every possible means.

In Great Britain the same hostility was experienced, and the co-operators were forced into commencing a wholesale society, which is now familiarly known as the C. W. S. and has achieved world-wide influence.

The Commissioner believes that the new law restraining combines in Canada may make it possible "to compel the retailers to refrain from threatening to boycott wholesalers and manufacturers who sell to co-operative associations." We should hope that it may be possible to do this. It does not seem a great deal to ask. Co-operation is not an experiment. It has proved very effective in saving the services and the profits of the long line of middlemen, commission agents, jobbers and retailers that do the distributing work of commerce. If co-operation dispenses with any of these interpolations between the producer and the consumer, it is so much to the general public good. The middleman, of all grades, is only a useful member of the community in so far as he performs a service. To that extent he is entitled to reward, but if the middleman should become obsessed with the idea that he has a vested interest and some occult right to profit from the purchases of the public, irrespective of the necessity for his services, then he becomes an incubus, a parasite, and will in due time meet with the fate of all things and institutions that perform no useful purpose.

THE CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS AND THE PURCHASE OF NOVA SCOTIAN COAL.

In a letter addressed to the President of the Canadian National Railways, Mr. D. D. MacKenzie, the member for Cape Breton North, pleads eloquently the case of the Nova Scotia coal mines in requesting a larger allotment of the coal purchases of the Canadian Government Railways.

Mr. MacKenzie touches upon the two main reasons for the present exclusion of Nova Scotia coal from its usual markets, namely, the shortage of ships occasioned by Admiralty requisition, protracted beyond all reason; and, secondly, the great drain upon the colliery working organizations, and their permanent impairment caused by heavy voluntary enlistments and an unusual percentage of casualties among the miner-soldiers. The late leader of the Opposition concludes by writing:

"I must with all respect, yet with all insistency, impress upon you the necessity of coming to the assistance of these men by purchasing the article which they produce, whether or not it may be more expensive than the same article imported from a foreign country. This is not only a national question but an imperial one. . . . The reasons you gave for not buying more of our coal do not measure up to the gravity of the situation involved."

The reasons given by Mr. Hanna for not buying more coal from Nova Scotia than was needed in the Eastern Lines section of the C. N. Railways, east of Levis, or thereabouts, was that Nova Scotian coal cost much more than American coal.

Is the cost of an article, purchased by a national enterprise for national services the true measure of economy or statesmanship? Nova Scotian coal is costing more because of the sacrifices in life and services made by Nova Scotian miners, and because of the admirable manner in which the foresight of Nova Scotian coal owners had provided cargo carriers so excellently adapted to the Admiralty requirements that they were requisitioned early and released late. American coal is costing less than Nova Scotian coal because it will always and did always cost less to mine, and because, thanks to the draft system and the lessons learnt from our experience, the United States coal mines were not drained of productive labor, but, on the contrary, the U. S. Government went to extraordinary pains to conserve and increase the production of what they realized to be the most essential raw material for war purposes. In other words, the United States coal trade benefited by Canadian sacrifices, and it is rather a poor return for the injuries that the war inflicted upon the coal trade in Nova Scotia, that because of the preferential position now occupied by United States coal operators, **occasioned by these same injuries**, Nova Scotia should be called upon to suffer further injury.

But, admitting that the Canadian National Railways can save large sums of money by buying United States coal in substitution for Nova Scotian coal, what does that really amount to? Do we not owe sufficient money to the United States already? Is not a five per cent premium on New York funds enough discount on the Canadian dollar to worry about? As we have pointed out in these columns many many times the importations of American coal are only exceeded in their tremendous increase by the deplorable halt in Canadian coal production, and it appears as if the Government itself were going to lead the procession towards the United States coal-heaps, and were going to set a good example by spending more money in the United States for coal that could be and should be produced in Canada.

If large numbers of men in Nova Scotia are thrown out of employment by the substitution of American coal, if sums for relief have to be voted by municipal, provincial and possibly federal agencies, if the royal-