

By Hon. Mr. Webster:

Q. When there is only a certain quantity to go around, they must distribute it among all their customers?—A. I suppose so. I do not know why, but they do not always come forward with the goods, you know, when we want them.

Q. What is the difference in price, Mr. Robertson, between the standard companies and the independent coal companies?—A. Last winter it would run up as high as \$4 or \$5 a ton.

Q. Four or five?—A. Yes.

By the Chairman:

Q. At times?—A. At times; well, pretty nearly all last winter. Of course I was not here during the months of February and March. I think those were the most strenuous of the season.

By Hon. Mr. Webster:

Q. How many coal merchants would there be in the city of Montreal distributing coal?—A. I would not like to tell you how many.

Q. Over a hundred?—A. Yes.

Q. Over a hundred in Montreal?—A. Of so-called dealers.

Q. Well, distributors.

By the Chairman:

Q. A good many of them are men who come to you or the other big firms?—A. Yes, if we have coal; but if we have not, they have to go out themselves and buy the coal.

By Hon. Mr. Webster:

Q. And pay the premium?—A. Yes.

By the Chairman:

Q. There are a number of cases in which there is what looks like an excessively high price, whereas the price is really not excessive.—A. I know some people who bought coal this year and lost money on every ton of coal they sold, in order to keep in business.

Q. They were not the people whose prices were the lowest?—A. No.

By Hon. Mr. Webster:

Q. You spoke of cartage in various sections of the city, Mr. Robertson. Is there any suggestion you could make whereby any of the standard companies could co-operate to economize on the expense of cartage?—A. Oh, I do not see how you can.

Q. There is nothing practical?—A. I do not think so.

Q. Each man for himself and the devil for the last?—A. Yes.

By the Chairman:

Q. Parliamentary Committees hear a great deal about combines and trusts.—A. Yes.

Q. Could you———A. Put all the coal in a pot?

Q. Could you make your delivery subsidiary so that it might save money?—A. We thought of that once in Montreal, but it came to naught. That was a good many years ago, though. That is, it was suggested that all the coal be pooled.

Q. Yes?—A. But there were so many different interests in it that the thing fell through. I believe it would have been a good thing if it had gone at that time, but it would be hard to operate it now, there are so many people in the business.

[Mr. Farquhar Robertson.]