

wrong impression. He said that fifty thousand men had been sent overseas who were returned and should never have been sent.

Mr. MACDONALD: I said that according to the evidence submitted to members of this House, fifty thousand men, medically unfit, had been recruited and sent across.

Mr. BURNHAM: That gives a wrong impression. The hon. gentleman must know that the Army Act and the K.R. & O. allow men to misstate their ages. A man, on his attestation, may make a solemn declaration that he is forty-four years of age, when in fact he is fifty-four, without incurring any penalty. A great many men, in mistaken zeal, thought they could get away with that, and stated that they were forty-four, and so came within the required age, and so got across. But when they were pressed for an accurate statement, they had to admit that they were of a greater age, and so they had to be returned to this country. This accounts for a large number of the fifty thousand. And they were admitted by reason of a flaw in the Army Act, and no power in the world, no minister of any nation could possibly have prevented it, because it is in all of the Army Acts. And why it is there, I do not know. Now, a word as to another point suggested by the hon. member. The Minister of Labour has been reproached with having allowed food prices to go up without taking proper steps to prevent it. The hon. gentleman is one of those who have been pressing for free wheat on the ground that this change would send up the prices. At one moment the hon. gentleman is for limiting the prices that have gone up, and at another he is for taking steps to cause prices to go up. Which is it to be? We do not wish to go to the people with two horns of the dilemma—one is surely bad enough. Let us know which it is to be.

Mr. KYTE: I am sure that those who read the statements of the Minister of Labour here to-night will be disappointed to find that, when he was requested to give full explanation of the results of the operations of his department with regard to the cost of living, no results were forthcoming. He did state that questions were sent out as to the cost of certain commodities, but he was unable to point out that his activity resulted in reducing the cost of living by one iota. We had a complaint in Montreal a few months ago because potatoes were selling in that city at \$3.50 a bag. The

[Mr. Burnham.]

Minister of Labour made some inquiry and ascertained that, whereas the dealers in Montreal alleged that there was a great shortage of potatoes in Canada and that this was the reason why prices had gone up, the fact was that, over and above all the requirements for consumption and for seed for the forthcoming season, there was a surplus of two million bushels of potatoes in the Dominion. But the hon. minister did nothing, and potatoes are selling at \$3.50 a bag, if not \$4.00, in Montreal at this time. As to the price of flour, the hon. gentleman stated that the result of his inquiry was to show that no undue profits were being charged by those engaged in the production of this article.

Mr. CROTHERS: I did not say that.

Mr. KYTE: The hon. gentleman was speaking generally of articles of consumption, and stated that there was no evidence of undue profits being paid.

Mr. CROTHERS: No.

Mr. KYTE: Does the hon. gentleman think that when milling companies which were content to earn six or seven per cent before the war are now dividing profits among their shareholders at the rate of twenty-four per cent, that is not an undue profit for war times? The minister stated also that the high cost of these articles of food was due to the large number of men who were taken from the ranks of the producers and became consumers. But how is that to be reconciled with the statement made in the press the other day, that, as to the wheat in this country, over and above all that was needed for consumption and as seed for the coming season, there was not less than 116,000,000 bushels in the Dominion at this time? Besides that, the wheat now held by the millers, and for the flour produced from which they are charging enormous prices, was purchased by them from the farmers at from \$1.20 to \$1.40 a bushel? The farmers received no benefit, the speculators got it all, and they have been dividing enormous profits at the very time when the minister tells us that no undue prices were being charged. Read the trade journals from day to day and you will find that companies engaged in the manufacture of food products are dividing among their shareholders much larger profits than those they made before the war. Companies that were content with five, six, or seven per cent before the war,