

I am divulging no secret when I say that large financial interests in England are already prepared to put substantial sums of money into Alberta for the purpose of developing the coal areas there. The largest group engaged in coal mining in Great Britain are prepared to invest this money, which means that one question which should engage the attention of this committee, apart from those matters particularly raised by the hon. member for Lambton, must be the cost of transportation. That is the one problem concerning the Canadian people at this time, and if my right hon. friend—

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Would it not be wise to add the cost of distribution as well?

Mr. BENNETT: Very well, and if my right hon. friend would be good enough to accept the suggestion in the spirit in which it is made, he might recast his motion, not for the purpose of making it conform to any suggestion of mine, but to harmonize it more with the report made in 1923, and with the motion of the hon. member for East Lambton, whereby a very great deal of good would be accomplished. We would not waste time, we would not duplicate effort, and may I also suggest that when it is being done, perhaps it would expedite matters if the hon. member for Toronto Northwest (Mr. Church) were appointed to that committee.

Mr. J. E. ARMSTRONG (East Lambton): As I am responsible for placing the resolution on Hansard, I wish to say a few words in support of it. The hon. member for Toronto Northwest (Mr. Church) has referred to the two previous committees that inquired into this question, one appointed by the Senate and one by the House of Commons. Their reports are available to everyone. I read those reports very carefully before placing this resolution before parliament, and the proposition that I have in view in connection with the transportation of coal from the northwest and from the eastern part of this country to the central provinces is an entirely different proposition from anything that has been dealt with in those two reports.

My proposition, in a few words, is simply this: That the coal be carried from the west to Port Arthur and Fort William, and then be transferred into boats and carried on down the lakes as far as Toronto, if you like, from the west, and as far as Kingston, we will say, from Nova Scotia. The proposition is a feasible one, because you will be able to save an enormous sum of money in freight rates.

Take, for instance, the freight rate from Port Arthur and Fort William down through lake Huron, on through the river St. Clair and on to lake Erie; the coal can be carried by boat, including the cost of loading and unloading, for just about \$1 a ton. What better argument could a man use in support of this proposition? I have investigated the loading and unloading facilities that have been perfected within the last few years, and I am convinced that coal can be carried and delivered at ports along lake Huron, the river St. Clair and along lake Erie for less than, or say, \$1 per ton from Port Arthur or Fort William. If we can carry grain at 1½ cents a bushel from Fort William or Duluth to Buffalo, surely we can carry coal at a similar rate. Compare that rate with the rail rate; compare it with the rate which the railway commission will be compelled to put before you in their decision; the railway rate is an entirely different proposition.

While I do criticize the government for not appointing this committee weeks and weeks ago—it is now nearly two months since I placed the resolution on Hansard—while we have lost a lot of valuable time, I believe that we shall be able to place before parliament a great deal of valuable information that will help materially to solve this problem.

I do not wish to take up any more time in support of the proposition, but I am convinced that the committee, if they will get to work immediately, and attend faithfully to their duties in that regard, will be able to show some good results before the close of this session.

Sir HENRY DRAYTON (West York): I rise merely in connection with a remark passed between myself and the minister when he was speaking in the first instance. I pointed out to him that I thought there was very great occasion for the hon. member for Toronto Northwest (Mr. Church) to talk on this subject whenever he could get an opportunity. He has to; all of us ought to, if for no other reason than the reason of endeavouring to get some action some time out of this government. That of itself is quite sufficient justification. If we could get into the heads of this government a better sense of their responsibilities to-day, it would be a grand thing if we went on talking even for a considerable time. I refer to what the right hon. the Prime Minister says. After all, he says, if you do not want this I do not want it, and I will take it back. We are only doing this, he says in effect, because you want it. That is not what we want, Mr. Speaker. We want coal for the people of this country. We want the