

think, in a very considerable measure, to the fact that Canadian vessels engaged in the coasting trade, carrying coal more especially, have been requisitioned by the British Government, very serious inconvenience is being caused to people who are using coal, especially soft coal. They are carrying on various industries in the Maritime Provinces, and a continued supply of coal is of the utmost importance to them. When I was in St. John a few days ago I was told that there was a very great shortage of soft coal; indeed, there was almost a coal famine. We have seen it stated in the newspapers that this Government is being consulted from time to time by the British Government in respect to the various matters which are of mutual interest and concern to Canada and the Empire. I would like to ask my right hon. friend if this Government is consulted as to what vessels engaged in the Canadian trade shall be requisitioned for the purposes of the Imperial Government. I was told in this connection that one vessel engaged in carrying coal from the mines to St. John was lately requisitioned by the British Government, was taken to New York, and was kept idle there for three weeks before it became necessary for this vessel to carry the cargo for which the British Government had requisitioned it. It does seem to me that this Government ought to be consulted in regard to the commandeering or requisitioning of vessels engaged in the Canadian trade, because it is almost of as much importance that the industries of Canada should be kept constantly going and well supplied with coal as it is that vessels should be engaged in the carrying trade for the Government of Great Britain. Has the Government been consulted in reference to these matters?

Sir ROBERT BORDEN: The whole situation in respect of shipping is a very difficult one, because not only the British Empire but the Allied countries have to depend largely upon the shipping facilities which the Empire can furnish. As the necessities of every one of the Allied nations for a certain amount of tonnage are sometimes very urgent, my hon. friend can understand that the situation is attended with considerable difficulty so far as the British Government is concerned.

With regard to the requisitioning of ships engaged in the local trade of Canada, I entirely agree with my hon. friend that the Government of this country ought to

[Mr. Pugsley.]

be consulted; and that has been the case sometimes, but not always. The view which my hon. friend has enunciated in that regard has been put forward to the British Government, and I hope that so far as the future is concerned opportunity will always be given for consultation, although I entirely realize that the necessities of the war might be so paramount that we could not refuse our consent, even though it might be attended with some inconvenience to the people of this country, and especially to our industries.

As far as the difficulty in St. John is concerned, I think the Admiralty have endeavoured to assist in every way in that regard. We have been in consultation not only with the Admiralty, but with the Director of Overseas Transport and with the Dominion Coal Company. The same difficulty has arisen at Halifax, and an effort has been made, with some success I think, to fill the temporary needs at that city as well. As far as I am advised at the present moment, the provision which has thus been made will overcome any difficulties that seem to be imminent. That is my advice as regards both St. John and Halifax. If my hon. friend would speak to me on this subject, I could give him some further information which is of a more or less confidential nature, and which it would be undesirable that I should make public at present.

#### SHIPMENT OF SYRUPS FROM WEST INDIES.

On the Orders of the Day:

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: In the absence of the Minister of Trade and Commerce the other day, I brought to the attention of the Government certain complaints made by Quebec merchants against the subsidized service given by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company between Canada and the West Indies. The complaint was that the vessels of that line will carry sugar, but not syrups and molasses, as sugar is a more convenient and profitable cargo. Could my hon. friend give me any information upon this subject?

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: With reference to the line plying between Canada and the West Indies, although it has four very excellent and commodious vessels, the trouble at the present time is quite distinct from the situation under pre-war conditions. Both at the West Indies end and at the Canadian end there is a congestion of freight