

*Customs Act—Drawbacks*

can be done is to see to it that no individual is permitted to make profits out of this business which so disastrously may affect a nation. The present measure does not make any provision to prevent the making of profits out of war.

Only to-day I received a letter from the editor of *The People's Weekly*, a labour publication in the city of Edmonton. Several weeks ago this paper undertook to circulate a petition with a view to having it presented to parliament. The editor writes:

Under separate cover in three parcels we are sending you the petitions to take the profit out of war which have been received in this office. There are 27,781 names on the sheets mailed from here. They are mostly from Alberta, although a few are from Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

The writer goes on to state that he understands that *The Western Farm Leader* is sending a batch of petitions. The letter then proceeds:

You will notice that the kinds of sheets used are varied in size, shape and condition. They have been carried around in farmers' pockets and workmen's overalls. While there was no organized circulation of the petition, nevertheless hundreds of individuals expended much time and effort in securing names. The letter accompanying a petition with one hundred and thirty-three names read: "I have had to walk close to one hundred miles to get these few names, part of it on snow shoes. I only encountered one who refused to sign." This last sentence is contained in almost every letter received. There is usually one person in a community who will not sign. Of course the petition has only been circulated where the *People's Weekly* is known. The daily papers have not mentioned the campaign. But where it has been circulated practically everyone has signed. I would say that the experience of those who circulated the petition indicates that if every person in Canada had had a chance to express themselves on the matter the result would have been an almost unanimous vote to take the profit out of war.

May I say that in addition to this campaign in Alberta a number of similar petitions have been circulated in other provinces. I have some of these containing tens of thousands of names, and all have not yet arrived. So far I have not had a chance of presenting them to the house, but I would say that with very little organized effort, and through the initiative of a few individuals in the west, all these people have volunteered in their respective communities to try to do what they could to impress upon the government the necessity of taking profit out of war.

May I avail myself of the opportunity afforded by this piece of legislation to urge upon the government that they supplement it by a more drastic and far-reaching measure. It is only fair to the great masses of our people that no one be allowed to profit

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

from a future war. To-day we read about certain companies doing businesses which, in themselves, are perfectly legitimate, but through which because of the war preparations in Europe, they are making tens of millions of dollars. I have in mind the nickel companies and their enormous profits. Undoubtedly a very considerable portion of their production is to-day going into war munitions. I cannot see why, in a world troubled with such unrest that there is danger that Canada may be drawn into war—unrest to such an extent that this government has thought it necessary to spend millions of dollars to guard against possible contingencies—I cannot see why any group in Canada should be permitted to make money out of that kind of business. All I can do is to urge that this legislation be supplemented by other more drastic measures. Would the minister tell the committee whether something further is contemplated, and what general lines of policy will be followed in the administration of the section under discussion?

Mr. ILSLEY: I was under the impression that a complete statement on the whole subject was made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) at an earlier stage in the session. I am not in a position to state what the government contemplates, but undoubtedly in the event of this country being involved in a war extraordinary profits will be guarded against. I can say that that matter has been fully considered. The hon. member will recall that during the period of the last war and shortly afterwards the Business Profits War Tax Act became operative, and that it was one of the measures adopted at that time to prevent private industry from profiteering to too great an extent.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: The minister would not call that effective.

Mr. ILSLEY: I have not made a study of that act, as it was long before my time in this parliament. However, that is one method which could be adopted. The hon. gentleman suggests the taking of profit entirely out of dealing in war materials, or taking the profit entirely out of war. I recall listening attentively to the debate which took place in the early stages of this session. I heard the hon. gentleman and other hon. members speak in that debate, and if I remember correctly, it was pointed out that no one could make a profit out of the growing and selling of wheat to belligerents, or out of the selling of foods and a wide range of materials to belligerents or to others who might be con-