

I have not a specific cure to offer the House, Sir, but I sometimes think—I hate to make the suggestion because I know it will be misconstrued—but I think that one party is afraid and the other dares not tackle this problem as the people have good reason to expect them to do. What is there about it that should frighten any party or any member? We are in control of the resources of this country from the Atlantic to the Pacific—if we are not we ought to be. If we could do nothing else we could at least say to the one railway company that we own and control—for the board of management of the Canadian National Railways are the servants of this parliament, as we are the servants of the people—and we could say to that board: We require you to keep accurate accounts of the absolute cost of transporting coal from the Maritimes and from Alberta to the central markets of the Dominion. That is requirement number one. Then we could say to the premiers of the several provinces interested—and I submit that this would be a far better subject upon which to ask those premiers to confer with us than several other matters that I might mention; for instance, Senate reform; that can wait; we are in no great rush about that except that some of us are rushing to get into that chamber—we could say to those gentlemen: Coal is something that the people must have, whether we mine it ourselves or whether we import it from the United States, and therefore our fuel supply is of national importance. Now, let us divide the central provinces into three or four sections, ascertain the freight rate from the Maritimes and from Alberta to given points in those sections, and there set up municipal distribution centres, if you will, in co-operation with the provincial and federal authorities. Then let parliament, or whatever body has the power, say: We will impose an ad valorem duty on coal sufficient to exclude the United States product, but the price of our coal to the Canadian people shall be so much and no more, that price to include a profit for the retailer, for the wholesaler and for everyone else who handles it—even for the producer. Hon. members may say to me: That is a fantastic doctrine. I do not care if it is. We have a national problem to solve, and this is a suggestion towards its solution. I would sooner hear a man make a foolish suggestion than remain silent.

I was speaking of the proposed royal commission. Suppose it inquires into this subject in Nova Scotia and finds that the transportation costs are too high; then what are we

to do? Day after day in this House we have seen the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Stewart), whose department deals with mines, rise in his place and say: All freight rate problems are settled by Sir Henry Thornton and his associates, and this government can do nothing to help you; you must go to them. Suppose the royal commission makes its report to this House, and these problems are presented to us; what is the government going to do then? Are they going to say: You must go to the railway under Sir Henry Thornton. We go there and he says: We cannot carry this coal any cheaper; I am put here as the president of this road to show a profit, not to carry on in the interests of the people whom I was appointed to serve; I am here to show a profit rather than a loss, and I cannot lower those rates. Then how much further are we towards a solution of our problems in Nova Scotia?—assuming that the royal commission reports on this matter, and it is one of the things it cannot escape from reporting on.

While on the subject of coal, let me say this: We had a debate in this House this session lasting practically an entire day—I mention this in passing because it is of vital interest—and we debated the situation, and finally the government made certain suggestions. But what do we find? That between the government and the railway there is a snag of some kind existing, a hurdle which nobody seems to be able to get over. Besco, we are told, is willing to mine 15,000 tons of coal and bring it up to Montreal notwithstanding the fact that there is more coal banked there than they can use, and although they will lose one or two dollars a ton on this freshly mined coal; yet they are willing to absorb that loss, and all they ask the railway to do is to give them the same haulage rate as was given by the railway, at the instance of this government, on the haulage of coal from the west to the central provinces. That is all that Besco is asking. What is the counter proposition? The counter proposition the railway makes to Besco is this: We are not satisfied to do our part; we are not satisfied that you should absorb a loss of \$2 or \$2.25 per ton, which you are willing to do; we ask you to bank this coal down at North Sydney, and we will take it off your hands as banked coal next summer. Then what is the situation? Besco finds, in the first place, that it will lose 50 cents a ton on banked coal. In the second place, with their facilities for banking they find it will cost from three to five dollars a ton more to bank that coal, with the cost of handling, and so