

to this House in order to prove that the prices of certain goods were about the same in Canada as in the United States, but I do not think that the people of this country will be satisfied or that they will feel that they should keep still because the Prime Minister has shown that the profiteers in the United States are making 100 per cent when the profiteers in Canada are making only 99 per cent.

The time for investigation has passed. Deeds are needed: First of all, in my humble opinion, the Government should exercise a strict control over our exports, taking as their motto "Charity begins at home." There should be some action taken for the vigorous repression of monopoly and for the punishment of the profiteers. There should be absolute control of the cold storages, regulating them and compelling the owners to make public the cost prices of the goods stored up, and there should be an exercise by the Government of their right to sell the excess of food in these cold storages. There should be the removal of the tariff duties on all food stuffs and necessities of life. There should also perhaps be established public stores where food-stuffs will be sold at a necessary profit to cover the cost of administration. This would be a great factor in the lowering of prices; it has proved to be workable and very efficient in some other countries. Such are the ways and means to solve the problem, and I think if this policy were strictly enforced in Canada considerable general relief would very soon result. Reducing the cost of living is the problem that confronts us. The future of this country depends on the proper solution of the problem, and it is the duty of the Government to devote its whole energies for a while at least, to that object.

There is another question to which I desire for a few moments to draw the attention of the House and of the Government, namely, the question of what action should be taken in regard to deserters and defaulters under the Military Service Act. Last session I took the opportunity of expressing my views on this very important subject, but I deem it to be my duty to again return to the charge and to once more impress upon the Government the necessity of enacting a law under which a general amnesty will be extended to these men. Let me give the reasons for my conviction that the passage of a law to afford such relief would be wise and proper. The infringements of the Military Service Act were numerous in many parts of Canada, and

[Mr. Demers.]

I do not think we should be surprised at that when we remember that there was an absolute want of education of the public in regard to military service. Our population was not prepared to face conscription. Not only was there a complete lack of education of the people, but the idea of conscription was at first deliberately thrust into the background. In the next place, promises were made to a certain element of the population that they would not be made subject to conscription, and reasons were given as to the necessity for pursuing such a course. Furthermore, an Order in Council was passed in December, 1917, giving countenance to promises along those lines made by parliamentary candidates to their electors. Even the Prime Minister himself, speaking in this House in 1916, pointed out that compulsory military service was not to be contemplated in this country; and in February, 1917, one of the ministers of the Crown was elected in Dorchester as an anti-conscriptionist. That is the kind of education that was given to our young men with respect to compulsory military service, and under the circumstances is it surprising that so many of them were refractory to the law? Mr. Speaker, it should be remembered that the establishment of conscription was a very serious problem even in some countries more directly concerned with the questions at issue than Canada. The problem was only solved after a well-organized campaign of education of one or two years' duration and after the peril which threatened was fully realized for certain reasons that were not applicable to Canada. Moreover, in approaching this question, we must bear in mind that certain countries intend to proclaim amnesties to defaulters, although in those countries compulsory military service has existed for years. How much more necessary is it to adopt such a policy in a country like this, where the people had not the slightest idea of military service? I do not want to consider the various reasons why a general amnesty is necessary in Canada—for instance, the necessity of maintaining and enhancing production, which will not be realized if the Government continues to put all the young farmers in jail, as they are doing now, and the necessity of maintaining the peaceful industry where there is such a state of unrest, and so on. The actual and only result of the application of the Military Service Act to-day, as far as the defaulters are concerned, is that the poor are going to jail and staying there, whereas they should be at work in order to maintain themselves and families.