

The hon. member who preceded me in the debate has referred to the seriousness of the fuel situation in British Columbia. We on the prairies have a difficult fuel situation these days, and it is a condition which prevails throughout all of western Canada. We read in the daily press that in many districts schools, hospitals and other public institutions have had to close down because of a lack of fuel.

Under date of November 21, 1942, I sent a telegram to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) as follows:

Many municipal officials fear that due to lack of fuel with severe winter weather there will be undue hardship and suffering on the prairies. The present labour difficulties at the coal mines is the result of lack of proper coordination by various departments of the government. Imperative that immediate action be taken to avoid a very serious situation.

J. A. Ross, M.P. for Souris.

Mr. MITCHELL: I would like to tell my hon. friend we have put 1,800 men in the coal mines of western Canada since November, 1942.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): I am not disputing that. I received a reply from the Prime Minister stating that the telegram had been passed on to the ministers of the two departments most vitally concerned, and that the cabinet were giving the matter its attention. Those two departments were the Department of Finance and the Department of Labour.

On January 27, 1943, I had considerable correspondence with respect to a meeting of the boards of trade and municipal officials at Minnedosa, Manitoba. I shall not go through the whole of this correspondence, but I shall read the principal resolution, which is as follows:

Resolution of a meeting of western associated boards of trade and municipal bodies held at Minnedosa January 27, 1943.

Whereas the fuel situation is a national problem due chiefly to lack of labour, and the need for fuel is immediately urgent.

And whereas the dominion government controls all available labour, such as conscientious objectors, forestry battalions, and with their consent prisoners of war, and whereas in the Riding Mountain National Park supplies of one hundred thousand cords of dry poplar are now available and in the park and wooded areas of provincial lands great supplies of green wood is available.

Be it resolved that the Minister of National Resources and the fuel controller be urged to take action forthwith to make these supplies available.

Signed Mayor Young, Brandon
Mayor Pollock, Neepawa
Mayor Ramdsden, Dauphin
Mayor Clark, Minnedosa.

I have several other resolutions with regard to the matter, of which the departments concerned have copies.

Speaking on March 24, 1942, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of national selective service, and defined its policy. On August 19 of the same year on a nation-wide broadcast he told of the extension of that policy in order to put all men and women to work in essential industry.

On January 16, 1943 he is reported to have written the Minister of Labour asking for detailed answers to some nineteen questions relating to Canada's man-power situation, or as to what has become of the words uttered by the Prime Minister himself on March 24 and August 19.

Mr. MITCHELL: I do not know how that letter got out, but I think the use of it is reprehensible. I am not referring of course to the use made of it by the hon. member who is speaking. But it was merely a routine letter such as is sent out every year by the leader of the government prior to a session. I say that the use of that letter is unfair and unfortunate.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Well, if it was unfortunate, let us have the letter.

Mr. ROSS (Souris): I have only taken it from the daily press; and in view of what the minister has said now, he should let us have a copy of it.

In the meantime two things are entirely responsible for the present difficulties in connection with food production, namely, the price-ceiling set-up without proper consideration for parity prices, and the mishandling of Canada's man-power problem. With respect to the price-ceiling may I say that since June 29 of last year I have had a question on the order paper concerning the wartime prices and trade board, and I have not yet received an answer to it, because some of the information asked for Mr. Gordon does not wish to give.

I believe most people realize that inexperienced men cannot properly operate and take care of modern mechanized agricultural equipment. With it, one man can do several times the amount of work that can be done by a man using horse-propelled equipment. Many of these experienced operators have left the farms. Under the present set-up it would be difficult if not impossible to get them back on the land. A great deal of planning and effort must be put forth before a crop is produced and harvested in this country. Much of this production is used, in turn, in the production of beef, bacon, poultry, eggs, dairy