

to the people through its radio station, its daily, its French and English weeklies, to provide them with housing facilities, but all to no avail. A government subsidiary company was approached, but answered that the number of our veterans was too small to warrant such building projects. Some time later, I took upon myself to inquire from a member of the legion in Granby the number of returned veterans. I learned that up to now we had more than 600. As a reward for the sacrifices they made overseas, those brave men would ask for nothing more than a home, however small. It is rumoured that the company to which I referred is ready to reconsider its decision. Meanwhile, a large portion of the people are waiting to see this hope fulfilled.

May I be permitted at this point to mention the county town of Waterloo, whose loyalty to the party in power has not wavered, although its two munitions factories were closed at the beginning of June last year. It can boast of the greatest war effort on the basis of its population. I tried vainly to secure the crown buildings for the municipal authorities. They were sold to strangers by the War Assets Corporation, to be demolished. Waterloo is left waiting for a new industry to absorb its unemployed, as a reward for its war effort. In view of the above mentioned facts, I hope that the wartime prices and trade board will cooperate in the way indicated recently by the Right Hon. Minister of Reconstruction (Mr. Howe) to help this municipality. Because of our returned veterans and of a floating population which has come back to its pre-war domicile, there is a housing shortage in Granby and Waterloo, as in most other cities and municipalities of the country. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that for a long time to come, the Minister of Finance will keep in office the housing administrators all over the country.

Several of my colleagues and myself have been informed of a shortage of building materials which contractors expect from manufacturers; rumour has it, however, that the latter must attend to priority orders before supplying other customers. That being the case, it is to be hoped that the building trade will increase its activity in the near future so that several thousand families now living in inadequate quarters may be properly housed. With reference to this industry, may I draw your attention to existing conditions and while my suggestion will not, I hasten to add, solve the construction problem it can substantially improve the situation. Throughout the country, at present, many wholesale merchants dealing in building materials are issued licences authorizing them to do both whole-

[Mr. Boivin.]

sale and retail business; nowadays, they tend to limit themselves to retail trade which is more profitable to them; contractors who formerly had the right to buy at wholesale prices and are now forced to pay retail prices, naturally refuse to purchase at an increased price. Distributors take advantage of the shortage of materials to make unreasonable profits, and in my opinion inspectors should be appointed to make sure that they sell at wholesale prices, for if their business was profitable in normal times they should, in return, do their fair share in critical times. I am sure that such steps would help to curb black market operations and materially increase the building of houses.

Mr. COTE (Matane-Matapedia): Hear, hear.

Mr. BOIVIN: The primary purpose of the budget in former years was to bring the war to a successful conclusion. Why should it not aim to put an end to difficulties occurring not overseas this time but right here in this country?

Speaking of the budget, I wish to refer to a problem which is being discussed from coast to coast at present, a problem which it seems dangerous to tackle. This matter is highly important but it seems that my older colleagues are reluctant to discuss it. I am speaking of army deserters. On July 4, 1946, the *Ottawa Journal*, five o'clock edition, published an article under the following headline which appeared in large type: "The Provost Corps is seeking 14,000 deserters".

It read as follows:

The Mounted Police and Provost Corps are still seeking 14,117 deserters, of which 5,819 are volunteers and 8,298 have been called up.

After reading that item I wondered whether the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Abbott), in spite of his numerous occupations, ever took time to discuss this matter with the Minister of Finance in order to ascertain the cost to the country of these gentlemen, who deserted the army for a reason which in their own mind appears quite legitimate, and of which you are all aware.

Some people seem to believe that deserters cost nothing to the country as long as they are absent without leave. I do not agree with that opinion, especially since I visited military camps and found out that officers and men are waiting for the return of the deserters, and spend their time playing cards or fooling around; they seem to hope that the deserters will take their time to return so that they may keep their well paid jobs, especially in the case of officers. It is only natural that those