

terests of the British Government. That will not at all improve the conditions affecting the inland coastal transportation of Canada, water transportation between one part of Canada and another the point of production and the point of consumption. It will not in any way relieve the difficult situation in which we find ourselves to-day. I agree with what the member for Richmond (Mr. Kyte) has said, that the Minister of Labour has given no satisfactory explanation as to the high cost of living. It is not enough for this Government simply to say they have appointed commissions. It is true that some three years ago they appointed a commission which investigated the high cost of living, which commission found, I believe, that if the people of Canada would eat more fish and potatoes and less meat and flour, they would be able to get along more cheaply—a most valuable report, I suppose, in the opinion of the Minister of Labour. Afterwards it was announced by the newspapers that a committee of the Government, of which the hon. Robert Rogers was the head, had been appointed to take up this question immediately and arrive at a solution. A deputation waited upon him and he gave them the greatest possible encouragement as to what this active sub-committee was to do with a view to reducing the cost of living. Well, we have had no report as to what they have accomplished but we know what they said they could accomplish. It remains for the Minister of Labour to say to-night that he has sent out hundreds of questions to the people engaged in the coal business and in the sugar business, and that if he finds that the answers which he has received show an unsatisfactory state of affairs, he will forward them to the municipal authorities and expect them to take action.

Mr. CROTHERS: No, to the Attorney-General of the province.

Mr. PUGSLEY: My hon. friend has taken a splendid means of shirking the responsibility which rests upon this Government.

Mr. CROTHERS: Just as you did on the Sunday question.

Mr. PUGSLEY: That is a terrible confession for my hon. friend to make. He implies that the late Government, in regard to the Sunday question, referred the matter to the Attorney General of each of the provinces, and he says that this Government did the same thing in the case of the high cost of living and for the same reason. In

other words, he wants us to understand that it was done in order to shirk responsibility.

Mr. CROTHERS: I was reminding you of what you did, that is all.

Mr. PUGSLEY: If my hon. friend is satisfied with that explanation, of course, I have nothing further to say. It does seem to one that this Government ought to have grappled with this question long ago. The British Government is commandeering every flour mill in Great Britain for the purpose of controlling the cost of flour. Why did not this Government adopt a similar course in Canada? The cost of flour regulates very largely the cost of other food products. Why did they not take charge of the mills of Canada when they saw that millions upon millions of dollars worth of stock, absolutely watered, not representing a single dollar of investment on the part of the capitalists, was earning 10, 15 and 20 per cent, the money coming out of the pockets of the Canadian consumer? Why did the Government not intervene and take charge of the flour mills, thus keeping down the price of flour and the cost of bread? When they saw that the cost of transporting coal between the mines of Nova Scotia and the cities upon the St. Lawrence was increasing because of the scarcity of shipping, why did they not take steps early in this war to acquire ships for the purpose of transporting coal from the mines to the places of consumption, in order to make the price of coal as low as possible to the thousands of poor people who were compelled to use it? When they saw, as they ought to have seen two years ago, that the cost of transportation between the anthracite mines of Pennsylvania and the ports of the Maritime Provinces was increasing so as to cause great hardship to the people, why did they not take some steps to engage in the building of ships and go into the transportation business in order to keep down the cost of fuel? My hon. friend must not treat the matter lightly; and while he may agree with the Minister of Finance that there is a condition of prosperity in this country, in the part of the Dominion from which I come there are thousands of people with a limited and a fixed income who are placed in a deplorable condition by reason of the high cost of flour, butter, meat, eggs, poultry and fuel. People who were ordinarily in comfortable circumstances are placed almost