

public was shamefully fleeced. In this connection, I do not wish to refer to the companies whose case is pending; others are not yet so, but will probably be later on. And we cannot help—

Mr. BARRETTE (Translation): Did you discuss this subject, under the previous regime?

Mr. DESLAURIERS (Translation): I beg of you, Mr. Speaker, to see that the rules of the house are observed. Otherwise, I shall have the painful duty to request the Sergeant at Arms to fetch a very small bench for the hon. member, if he continues to carry on like a school boy.

An hon. MEMBER (Translation): He will be put out.

Mr. BARRETTE (Translation): We shall go out together.

Mr. DESLAURIERS (Translation): Under the circumstances, seeing that the government contributes to the relief of unemployment, I think it is their duty to-day as it was last year—instead of sending us from Caiaphas to Pilate and refusing to hold an investigation when all the consumers of Ottawa, day after day, requested them to do so—to proceed as they thought proper to do in the Beauharnois corporation affair. On the request of a humble member, protected by his parliamentary immunity, the government, one will recall, thought themselves bound to take action publicly and at the country's expense.

It was directed against certain hon. members of the Senate, which was a more serious affair, while in this case it only affects certain importing companies of American, Russian and Scotch coal. I think, sir, that this question should be looked into, because it is a more serious one than that which prompted the inquiry over the charges of the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Gardiner). This inquiry was directed against only a few wealthy individuals, in a very limited district, who were taking some risks in this enterprise; while these companies speculate on the distress of the people and especially at a time when no one is working, no one has money to purchase coal during an exceptional hard and long season. At the time of the Beauharnois inquiry, people were doing well and those who speculated could afford doing so.

The hesitation of the government since these coalitions have organized, seem to denote that, at times, friendship takes precedence over duty so as to allow these companies, in the

grip of a Siberian cold, 40° below zero, not only to maintain the high prices of coal, but to even raise them. And this while sister companies are fined by the courts for having obliged unemployed, receiving the dole, to pay the coal as much as \$20 per ton. If one takes into account the humidity absorbed by coal heaped on the wharves, exposed to the weather since the summer, these poor people are made to pay as much as \$20 per ton for coal worth \$5 per ton, this is most unreasonable. I think the government should intervene as soon as possible, setting aside all party lines and having no other goal than the welfare of the people.

Mr. BARRETTE (Translation): I think that you yourself wish to make political capital out of this.

Mr. DESLAURIERS (Translation): The present price of coal is most ruthless. It is a known fact that these companies can purchase this product at \$5 per ton, owing to lower wages, cheaper transport and handling during this crisis. These trusts take advantage of this to squeeze their victims, forcing, at times, heads of family—I saw many in the course of this winter—receiving, at times insufficient relief, to ration off the bread of their children so as to prevent them from freezing to death.

This situation would never have existed had the government performed their duty at the right time. They hesitate, at present, to expose the impudence of this trust which endeavours to carry on by unending court procedure, compensated, during that time, by the enormous profits they realize. At all events, I request, by my resolution, the control over coal trade and all coal imports. Let the importer, in the future, be forced to come before a commission, having the authority to fix the price of fuel. If the government have not the courage to assume the responsibility, which is theirs, in this respect, the people will soon have an opportunity to choose representatives capable of enforcing the laws of this country and to protect it against those whose conscience seem to entirely forget the human side.

Urgency is as much required, in the sense of this resolution, during this world wide depression, as it was during the Great War. The situation is as serious now as it was at that period, when all were working and receiving high wages; to-day, the problem interests people who have been without work for the last year or two, and who are completely destitute. It is urgent that the price of coal