

ernment are absolutely powerful in the country. Perhaps the Minister of Labour inside the Council room was in favour of regulating the prices of food and his colleagues did not look at it in the same light. If that were so I would get out of the Cabinet. I would do something for those I represent or get out.

Mr. EDWARDS: There is no doubt the price of foodstuffs has risen considerably since the beginning of the war, especially during the last twelve months. We have had two solutions proposed this evening. The hon. member for St. John (Mr. Pugsley) suggests in all seriousness that the Government should fix the price of potatoes, wheat, flour and so on. He does not say what that price would be but he proposes to make the price arbitrary and force the farmer to take whatever the Government says he should take for the article that he produces. I do not think that would meet the situation, because if the member of St. John was a member of the Government and was looking for votes, he would fix the price according to the number of votes that he could get by fixing the price. If he thought he could get more votes by fixing the price in the interest of the man who was producing the foodstuffs then his bowels of compassion would be all dried up in regard to the man who was consuming the foodstuffs. But that does not meet the situation. Then the hon. member for Maisonneuve (Mr. Verville) has a plan for meeting the situation and meeting it most certainly. He stands up in this House, professing to represent the labour interests of this country and he says that if something is not done to reduce the price of these foodstuffs he will encourage the mob in Montreal or anywhere to break into the storehouses and help themselves. In the time I have had a seat in this House I have never heard a responsible member of Parliament give expression to anything approaching the statement made by the hon. member for Maisonneuve, and I say it is very little credit to him to make such a statement. It is one which he should not have made as a responsible member of Parliament, because in that position more importance is attached to his utterances than perhaps should attach to them.

I remember in years gone by, when the farmers of this country were not making one-half of one per cent on their investments during the regime of the Liberal Government, one of the responsible members of the Laurier Government offered a solution to the farmers of the country who were

[Mr. Verville.]

making nothing. His suggestion was that they should work harder and eat less. That was the Liberal solution of the difficulty so far as the farmers of Canada were concerned during the fifteen years they were in power—work harder and eat less. In all the discussion we have heard this evening in regard to the high cost of living and foodstuffs, not one gentleman has attempted to get at the real reason for these high prices. Why is cheese the price it is to-day? Would any hon. member opposite say that the Government should step in and tell the farmers that they must take fifteen cents or eighteen cents or twenty cents a pound for cheese instead of the price they are getting, which is fixed by the demand across the water? Will any member opposite, as a member of the Liberal party advocate that? The hon. member for St. John (Mr. Pugsley) said that he would fix the prices. He did not say at what figure he would fix them. In regard to the price of butter and nearly all of these articles, if you look into the facts you will find that there is a reasonable cause at least for the great part of the increase in price. Take grain for instance. What about the grain crop of the United States for last year? The corn crop there was about 400,000,000 bushels short. The wheat crop was hundreds of millions of bushels short. The oat crop was short. Look into the number of head of cattle, sheep and swine in the United States, and you will find an enormous decrease; not only last year but for several years. The same holds good in this country and has held good for many years back in the countries of Europe. These are natural causes for a part, at least, of the high cost of foodstuffs. You have also to take into consideration, when you are considering the price of butter and eggs and things like that, the produce of the farm, the difficulty that the farmer has in securing labour for the production of these articles. Not one hon. gentleman who has spoken with regard to the matter has touched on that phase of the question. And yet that is something which every farmer in the country is thoroughly aware of. He is up against the difficulty of getting labour and has to pay many times what he paid a few years ago.

The hon. member for St. John (Mr. Pugsley) said that the Government should have foreseen all these things, the need of ships, and what was about to happen in this war. When the members on this side of the House sounded a note of warning in regard to the war which is now on, every