

Mr. HOWE: All I can say is that the navy removed what they considered of value. That was the understanding on which the ships were turned over. My hon. friend suggests theft. I do not know personally whether anything was stolen or not; I have no reason to believe that it was, but if the committee on war expenditures care to take this up I shall be glad to produce the caretaker of the ships, and I am sure the naval officers will come along and should be examined. I think we can hardly go into matters of this kind in committee of the whole.

Mr. COCKERAM: The pilfering is not while it is on the ships in charge of the naval department; it is after they are stripped.

Mr. HOWE: Perhaps so; I do not know.

Mr. PEARKES: Were the persons who had made inquiries regarding the purchase of these Fairmiles on the west coast, before the price was fixed at \$3,000, given an opportunity to purchase the ships at that price? I have information to the effect that the skipper on one of those ships made inquiries of War Assets Corporation at Vancouver respecting the price, and he was told it would be about \$12,000. That was before information had been received by War Assets Corporation that they would be sold for \$3,000. Would such a man be advised?

Mr. HOWE: I suggest that I cannot answer those questions. Obviously I would not know that. Why not refer this matter to the committee on war expenditures? Officials of the Vancouver office of War Assets Corporation could come to Ottawa, and so could the naval man who it is suggested had to do with this transaction. They could both appear before the committee. Any officer who had anything to do with the matter could come here, and I am sure the committee would be much wiser than I am at the present time. However, I do not know of pilferers. My information is that the only price put on them was that of \$3,000.

Mr. FERGUSON: Yesterday the minister said that in order to expedite construction at Chalk River, German prisoners of war had been employed. What wages are they receiving? How recently were they employed, and was any effort made to try to obtain men who were receiving unemployment insurance? Were attempts made to obtain the services of these men rather than those of German prisoners of war?

Mr. HOWE: What is the hon. member talking about?

Mr. FERGUSON: As usual, you might not know—because you do not listen. I wish you would listen to these questions, because I do not like repeating myself for your benefit. How recently were German prisoners employed at Chalk River, at what wages, and was any effort made to obtain Canadians for that work? I ask these questions because during the war the minister made an expenditure at Montreal of \$370,000 to employ a total of 54 people; and of that 54 there were 45 German enemy aliens out of prison camps. Those men were doing work which could have been done by Canadians who wanted work. Is this still going on?

Mr. HOWE: I should like to correct the hon. member on one point. No expenditure was made by my department during the war for the purpose of employing people. Expenditures were made for the purpose of producing munitions badly needed for the war effort. Let us get that straight. German prisoners are employed only when it is impossible to get Canadians for the work. They were employed no longer ago than last Sunday at Chalk River—because I saw them there. The reason was that we were not able to get other workmen. I believe the wage received by prisoners is fifty cents a day.

Mr. FERGUSON: I will send men from Collingwood who are on unemployment relief, and thus burdening the taxpayers; they can be sent down to do any work the minister may have for them at Chalk River. They can come on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday.

Mr. HOWE: Send me three hundred of them.

Mr. FERGUSON: Apparently the minister wants them. I shall be glad to get 300 men to do the work these prisoners of war are doing at Chalk River, and they will do it at reasonable and sane wages.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: The minister has made his explanation respecting the sale of Fairmiles, and also in connection with cargo ships. In a manner somewhat unusual for him, in so far as the Fairmiles case is concerned has admitted that the transaction was an improvident one, and one which he could not justify before the committee.

Mr. HOWE: Just a minute, now; let me say what I said. Do not try to interpret.

Mr. DIEFENBAKER: And speaking of interpretation: The minister gave a fine demonstration this afternoon of his ability in interpretation when in answer to the hon.