

place where we can dispose of our coal. We will all admit that the coal miner is a vital part of our economy, and it so happens that he is subjected to more danger in his operations, possibly, than any other person engaged in any other industry. The maritime coal problem is complicated just now by strikes, and this, of course, is one of the vital and serious matters of today. Before the strike was declared, the problem was complicated by a lowering of our production. When production is lowered, the cost of producing rises proportionately. Some people, who are not likely well qualified to judge, blame the miners; some others, who are equally unqualified to find the cause, blame the operating companies. I can say that the miners in the maritime provinces have been accepting a wage which has been consistently lower than that paid to the United States miner or the British Columbia miner.

There is another feature which should be mentioned. The average age of the miner in the maritime provinces is higher than that in either the United States or British Columbia. As far as the companies are concerned, it is a fact that the location of the coal seams makes it difficult to reach them and expensive to work them. There is another factor. I do not know whether it is the fault of the company or not, but, as I understand it, they are now operating on lines which were laid down many years ago. So I say that the companies are quite justified in pointing out their physical handicaps, and the miners are equally justified in pointing out what I have stated before, namely, their lower wage level, their higher average age and the fact that figures on absenteeism must be examined with great care.

Finding a solution for a problem involving so many factors is not going to be easy, and we have not too much time in which to do it; for it is generally accepted that, unless some remedy is soon forthcoming, the mining industry of the maritime provinces is headed for disaster. This disaster would affect the maritimes first and most seriously, but eventually its effect would be felt all over this dominion; and many of the effects would be profound. Therefore I say that it becomes a problem for the entire nation. After all, the prosperity of Canada depends upon the accumulated prosperity of the major factors. Therefore I would say that, in the emergent need for a solution of this serious national problem, the best planning efforts of the coal industry itself, the miners' unions and the government should be coordinated and combined. If we are to maintain the industry, we must have it so arranged that the miner must get a fair wage,

the company must have a fair profit and coal must be produced at such a price that it will be competitive with other coals which will appear on the only market we have.

The coal problem is not the only serious difficulty confronting the maritimes, for we now have the problem of unemployment. During the war period we had no unemployment in Nova Scotia. We had no war projects, but enlistment for war service and war work outside the maritimes provided employment for our people. There is one project which was mooted years ago and was promised priority after the war. The hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) referred to this project in his speech this evening. It is a project which has been proved feasible by competent engineers, a project to which we look hopefully to relieve our unemployment and the resultant exodus of young people from our province. I refer to the spanning of the strait of Canso. This will cost some money, but the amount required will be comparatively small, compared with the amounts spent in other parts of the dominion for projects not so strongly indicated; and it must be remembered that these other projects were far from Nova Scotia but we never hesitated or complained about paying our full share of their cost.

Apart from the benefits which would accrue directly to Cape Breton and the whole of the maritime provinces, and indirectly to the whole dominion, this project has an economic value. If I had time I could show by authentic figures that the savings to be made by eliminating the cost of operating the Canadian National ferry and the highway ferries over a reasonable period of years would more than equal the interest and sinking fund which would be necessary to defray the capital cost. I believe this is a business proposition for the government. The completion of this project will render a long delayed service. It was promised as one of the first post-war undertakings. The plan is feasible; it is of national importance; it is economical. Thousands of our people are idle, so that there should be no delay in getting the project under way. Full employment and full production were two important factors in Canada's successful war effort. The same two factors are equally essential in this conflict on rehabilitation and reconstruction.

I have no doubt that the government has a complete realization of all this, and my reference is for the purpose of emphasis. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, nor is a nation stronger than its major component parts. The maritimes are one of the