

storage business throughout the country; we have examined into the way in which collieries are conducted as to prices and all that sort of thing, and in a few days I will have ready a full report which I expect to place upon the Table and which will set forth the details of what we have done in these various lines. Of course, the great majority of the people of this country understand the main factors in the rise of prices, although they are confidently told by those who have an object in view that there are other causes. It is probably safe to say that thirty million men, if not a good many more, have been withdrawn from productive work to engage in destructive work. It is said that those men consume at least fifty per cent more than they would if they were civilians. That gives us the equivalent of 45,000,000 men consuming foodstuffs and producing nothing, withdrawn from productive labour and engaged in destructive labour. Before the war broke out, there was just about enough food grown to cover the world's consumption; we had not to throw any surplus food into the ocean. Take 45,000,000 men from producing; set them to destroy life and property; take that, in connection with the fact that last year, with slight exceptions in certain places, crops were short the world over, and with all this destruction and waste going on lessening production, and you have the main factors causing the advance in prices. Some people tell us that the rise in prices is due to cold storage and combinations. I admit that in some cases those things have had a slight influence on prices, but the main factors are those I have stated. We are endeavouring under that Order in Council to offset so far as we can those influences that, to a slight extent, may affect prices, but on the whole the others are the main factors.

Mr. MACDONALD: My hon. friend has in the course of his few remarks admitted that, although a condition has existed, he has done nothing to remedy it.

Mr. CROTHERS: He has not admitted anything of the kind.

Mr. MACDONALD: Will my hon. friend kindly restate what he has done?

Mr. CROTHERS: I thought I made myself perfectly clear. My hon. friend was not in the House at the time, I am told.

Mr. PUGSLEY: The minister appointed some committees.

Mr. MACDONALD: I was in the House.

[Mr. Crothers.]

Mr. CROTHERS: I did not think my hon. friend was here all the time.

Mr. MACDONALD: My hon. friend made an argument that because he made certain inquiries he had performed his duty.

Mr. CROTHERS: I said, if my hon. friend was here or if he was out of the House, that we had sent questionnaires to all the coal dealers in Canada and that from reports which we had received under oath and from other information, we were satisfied that the coal dealers were not making any undue profits and that there were no combinations as to coal except in one or two places.

Mr. MACDONALD: I heard all that.

Mr. CROTHERS: Then why does my hon. friend say that I have done nothing? We have done the same thing in regard to sugar, cold storage, etc.

Mr. MACDONALD: What my hon. friend has said means that he considers there is no duty thrown upon him or upon the Government to deal with the whole question of the food supply of this country in some drastic and imperative manner. Why did my hon. friend proceed under the War Measures Act and have an Order in Council passed giving him plenary powers, if the powers he was going to take simply consisted in the power to investigate matters by asking certain people certain questions? Does my hon. friend mean to say that this Government could not have taken, under the War Measures Act, powers of such a nature that they would be enabled to deal with problems of this kind and fix the cost of staple articles at figures within the reach of the ordinary individual? In this country we produce approximately 200,000,000 bushels of grain, whereas Canada consumes only 50,000,000 at the most. Does my hon. friend mean to say that there are no means that he or his associates in the Government could have devised by which the people of this country could have received the bread they require at some figure within reason, considering that we produce in this country four times what we consume and that we have such a huge surplus for export abroad?

Mr. BURNHAM: Free wheat will have that effect.

Mr. MACDONALD: I do not intend to pay any attention to my hon. friend who dreams about things. The situation shows that in regard to this matter the minister apparently thought his duty was ended