

Importation of Fuel

Mr. GUTHRIE: Your Honour was entirely right in pointing out the difficulties before allowing the discussion to proceed.

Mr. DESLAURIERS (Translation): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this resolution is to specially draw the attention of the house to certain trade abuses of too long standing and the victims of which have been not only the unemployed but the whole population of Canada.

Owing to the length and rigour of the winter from which we have just emerged, Providence seems to impose upon the government the task of investigating all unhuman coalition or conspiracy practised in the fuel trade of Canada, in the milk and bread trade as well, and to so legislate that trusts, with hearts of stone, be forced to respect, first, our laws and be prevented from accumulating fortunes over the distress of the people.

Anthracite coal does not exist in the two old provinces of confederation, and is practically nil in the other provinces. The United States, England and Scotland, at present, supply Canada, in this respect, through the medium of Canadian companies. On October 13, 1932, the hon. senator from the division of Rougemont drew the attention of the senate to the fact that rumours had spread that certain coal companies had combined so as to maintain high prices for coal, namely up to \$17 per ton, in Montreal, when, in the past, the same coal could be purchased for \$7 per ton. He requested that the question be brought to the attention of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gordon) for immediate consideration. On the promise of the hon. leader of the senate that this would be done, the upper house proceeded to another subject.

On October 21, 1932, the hon. senator for the division of Rougemont, having been informed, from a reliable source, that British anthracite coal cost the companies which imported it, \$5.30 per ton, on the wharves, at Montreal, introduced in the senate a resolution adopted by the Labour Board of Ottawa, requesting the government to hold an investigation on the prices of coal in Canada, and enforcing, if necessary the act dealing with coalitions. Then, always through the intermediary of the leader of the senate, it was suggested that the senate should proceed with this question in conjunction with the Federal Fuel Commission.

On November 9, 1932, the hon. senator for the division of Rougemont again presses his point and introduces a resolution from the [Mr. Speaker.]

secretary of the Central Board of the Municipal Associations of Ottawa, requesting that the government hold a public investigation, and not an inquiry in camera, as was being done.

To force the government to hold a public investigation over the operations of these various importing companies, the act requires that the request be signed by six persons who render themselves responsible for serious and heavy liabilities, especially, to-day when we are aware of the numerous subtleties of the act invoked in a recent investigation ordered by the province of Quebec and which ended by a fine, rightly deserved, imposed on some of these companies. I do not intend to carry on, in the house, the trial of the coal importing companies whose case is pending—an appeal having been lodged—and who may appeal even to the privy council and obtain, in four or five years, a judgment corresponding to the one in connection with the Labrador coast. I have not the right.

Mr. BARRETTE (Translation): Then why bring up the subject.

Mr. DESLAURIERS (Translation): Well, it is my privilege to state that the fine and accumulated costs will be entirely compensated, if we permit any of these companies to further shamefully prey on the unemployed and the public at large.

I refer to no one in particular in my resolution, however, I wish to discuss the question of coal imports, as a whole, such as practised in this country, so as to hinder any fleecing of the people by certain groups who wish to organize in such a way in order to transgress the law and prey shamefully, next winter and in future years, on the public at large. That is the outline of my theme.

Mr. BARRETTE (Translation): You are aware that an appeal has been lodged. Then, why bring up the subject?

Mr. DESLAURIERS (Translation): I would beg of the hon. member for Berthier-Maskinongé to observe the rules of the house. If he wishes to discuss the subject matter he will be given full opportunity. What I request of him is to act like a gentleman towards me as I intend to act towards him.

Undoubtedly the question which I have brought up is of wide interest, since it affects the federal treasury, which contributes one-third in the cost of the fuel distributed to the unemployed. It has been established that the