

to do so. A miner cannot be trained overnight; there are certain qualifications which he must have. If these men leave the mines, the minister will have considerable difficulty in finding others competent to take their places. I do not wish to hold up the committee any longer, but I hope the minister takes this whole situation in hand at once and decides to do something in the form of an interim programme until such time as the house reconvenes in the fall and proper preparations can be made to formulate a definite national coal policy.

Mr. GILLIS: Mr. Chairman, I realize that everyone is anxiously awaiting the end of this part of the session, and that there is a definite arrangement to close up at three o'clock. I am going to be as brief and as explicit as possible. I agree with the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Johnston) that it is absolutely necessary at this time to bring to the attention of the government the necessity of doing something with respect to the coal industry. At the present time there is chaos in this industry from coast to coast. While I believe the idea of subventions was good, they are absolutely inadequate to take care of the situation. That is not merely my opinion; it is borne out by facts. We see the same condition from coast to coast; it is developing into a serious situation. This press dispatch appeared in the *Ottawa Journal* of June 8:

Domestic and industrial consumers Wednesday were advised by the wartime prices and trade board to order next winter's fuel supplies now.

According to sessional paper 175B, tabled in answer to a question by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan, the government spent by way of subventions in 1940, \$4,315,589.83 to move 3,008,290 tons of coal. If the government supposes that that policy as carried out for the past several years is going to solve Canada's coal problem, all it has to do is to make an examination of the industry from coast to coast and it will find that we are drifting into a mess from which, if continued for any length of time, we may not be able to extricate ourselves.

Referring to the comparative figures with respect to the importations of United States coal, I find that whereas in the first nine months of 1939 we imported 7,658,255 tons, for the corresponding period of 1940 we imported 12,569,565 tons. While the government spent nearly four and a half million dollars last year on subventions, imports from the United States have practically doubled. And what has happened meanwhile in our own industry? On the west coast we find, according to a newspaper item of May 15, that more than

400 Cumberland, British Columbia, miners, members of No. 7293 local of the United Mine Workers, and their wives met last Saturday morning to discuss the serious economic situation which has developed. In that area they are working three days a week, seeking relief, holding mass demonstrations, trying to impress on their provincial government the necessity of relief. We heard the hon. member for Bow River describe the position of the industry in Alberta, where mines are actually closed.

Turning to Nova Scotia, the same situation prevails. Mines are closing at the present time. I drew the attention of the house three months ago to the closing of a mine in Cumberland county at River Hibbert, throwing 115 men out of employment. I took occasion to mention the contribution which these people were making to war industry. The minister of mines and resources for our province was quite indignant that I mentioned the matter here, asserting that the provincial government had a cure for the situation. That was three months ago. The day before yesterday I received a letter from that section reporting that those 115 men are still totally unemployed, and they asked me to bring the matter up here to see whether something could not be done. In Inverness county, at the other end of the province, we find that orders for coal for use on the Canadian National railway have diminished to a point where one hundred men are threatened with unemployment. As I have said, there is chaos in the industry from coast to coast.

I do not understand why concurrently the imports of coal from the United States have doubled. It does not make sense. From coast to coast in Canada we are closing mines; miners are demanding relief. Yet the fuel board, the government agency set up for the purpose of finding a solution of the problems of the coal industry, is advising the Canadian people that there may be a coal shortage. The facts speak for themselves. No effort is made by the government to deal with this difficulty in a practical way with the help of people who understand the situation and are desirous of curing the trouble.

I urge the minister to do what the hon. member for Bow River has advocated. A national fuel policy must be laid down for Canada. If the minister needs practical advice, those he should call in are the people who have made representations to his department and to the government during the last ten years on the matter of a national fuel policy. Thereby there could be worked out a solution of this problem