

Mr. PARENT: In view of the figures cited by the minister, I should like to know if Canada would be in a position to supply its own market in the event of the United States Government prohibiting the exportation of coal from that country into Canada.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I would be the last to admit that any action on the part of the United States would put us entirely off the map of the North American continent. We would have to meet the emergency, which I think is unlikely though not impossible; and in this connection I commend the prudence of the hon. member for Cape Breton North and Victoria (Mr. McKenzie) in his assertion that we should guard against all such emergencies to the utmost of our power. The doctrine is a sound one and every Canadian should subscribe to it. But if the emergency suggested by the hon. member (Mr. Parent) did occur, while there would be hardship and suffering which would undoubtedly put us to our wits end and tax all our resources, we have the coal. Indeed, we have more than the coal; we have wood; and though it would cost a great deal, I do not think the time would be long before we should be able to meet even a disaster so great as the one in consideration. The question of transportation is of course relevant, and it is just because the coal of this country must be transported over distances so vast, our country being so extensive in proportion to the population, that this nation has gone to such colossal expenditures in the matter of transportation. We are now engaged in the enterprise of deepening the Welland canal to a twenty-five foot capacity. It is hoped that the St. Lawrence route will ultimately be made of the same capacity, and I should not like the word "ultimately" to be interpreted as being synonymous with "eternity." I trust it may be given a reasonable interpretation. It is not a matter of merely finding a method of using Dominion moneys to achieve this result; it is a matter of finding Dominion moneys to use for the purpose. The deepening of the Welland canal had to be deferred during the progress of the war, and just how far we shall be able to go in resuming operations is purely a matter of finance. It is not a question of desire nor one of the wisdom of the undertaking, because so long as the coal and grain and other huge resources of the Dominion must be transported east and west, so long is it clear that water transportation must be provided therefor.

Coming to other sources of fuel, I have briefly stated what is being done in the way of endeavouring to make available our softer coal deposits. I might go further and say that the transportation problem is being thoroughly studied in the department, whose officers are only too anxious that larger appropriations shall be made to enable them to go forward with this work, which is a question of money, too. I gave the figures of the coal deposits of Canada, and I think I referred to Alberta at the time. If so, my figures were wrong. The coal deposits of Canada are estimated at four hundred thousand million tons, and the peat deposits of Canada at nine thousand million tons, or two and a quarter per cent of the coal deposits. The coal deposits of this country would last for centuries for all the people whom the most optimistic of us could contemplate as likely to inhabit this land. The peat deposits would afford very considerable relief, though their development should also be put upon a commercial basis provided some process could be found to make them available. Some progress has been made along that line, but I fear it is not the most encouraging.

As to oil as a source of fuel—and this is a matter which is becoming of more and more importance as the years advance—we are still in a rather unfortunate position. I am not sure that I can give the figures correctly as to this, but I think we imported last year something like four hundred and fifty-one million gallons of oil, as against two hundred and thirty-odd million gallons five years ago—a tremendous advance in the oil importations of the country. Our own oil production during the same period increased from nine to ten million gallons; so that just two per cent of the oil consumed in Canada is produced at home. It is hoped by all that this condition of affairs will not last long. Oil is much more easily transported than coal, and there is every reason to hope, if not to believe, that we may see a very considerable oil discovery in this country. This Government, the previous government, and the government that preceded it—and particularly the last—offered considerable inducements to enable private enterprise to discover oil; and those of us who have given any thought to this question will not hesitate long to decide that private enterprise is the most likely agency to lead to mineral discovery; yea, to mineral development. Bounties have been, and are being paid, in oil production. Some ten years ago the minister of that day, under his powers granted him by Parliament, put