

and you can be well assured, Mr. Speaker, that if the big oil companies have anything to say about the matter, there will be no more oil production in this country until the civilian supply is absolutely cut off. They are going to make the present supply last no matter whether we win or lose the war. Unless this government steps in and does something, our oil position is going to grow worse and worse. I do not know how much worse it will get.

We are having strikes all over the country. When the hon. member for Rosthern was speaking about unity I could not help thinking of the great number of strikes that are now in existence or pending. There was a steel strike in Nova Scotia, another at Sault Ste. Marie, another in Montreal, another in Ontario—there are strikes all over. Who is to blame for these strikes? The other day I was interested to hear the Prime Minister defend the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mitchell). He told us what a terrible job the Minister of Labour had and how pathetic it was that everybody should jump on him. Possibly the Prime Minister was right because I do not think the Minister of Labour is all to blame. He is in a dual position: he must satisfy the demands of labour and he must also satisfy the Minister of Finance (Mr. Ilesley). Of course the workers in different industries are striking. They are not striking to curtail production—not by any means. They are just as desirous of increased production as anyone else. What they are striking for is increased wages. In these war times everything has gone up in price. While the index of the bureau of statistics indicates a rise in the cost of living of something like 16.2 per cent, everybody knows that the cost of living generally has gone up much more than that, and accordingly these workers, and rightly so, I think, are demanding an increase in their basic wage. When I say that I do not necessarily mean an increase in wages all along the line. This strike situation is another evidence of the government's procrastination. It never attempts to solve a difficulty until a crisis is reached.

These workers who have been on strike have had quite a going over by some of the newspapers, especially the Montreal papers and some others. We have received from Cockfield, Brown and Company, Limited, of Montreal, clippings from the Montreal *Star*—not on behalf of the workers. Looking over these reports, I notice that they give the working hours of the men involved in these strikes. They say:

Wage-earners by hourly earnings were distributed as follows.

I will cite just a few figures. There are 410 employees receiving 55 cents an hour and

under, or 9.3 per cent of the employees. Those getting from 55½ cents to 65 cents an hour number 1,115, or 25.3 per cent of the employees. Let us take those two together. They represent about 1,500 men in the one plant. At 55 cents an hour, and working 48 hours a week, a man gets \$26.40 a week, or \$105.60 a month. Out of that \$105 he is not only expected but forced to buy victory bonds. He has to pay doctors' bills, bus fare, income tax, national defence tax, both of which have increased, and he has also to pay for clothing which has increased in price, and then pay rent, fuel and so forth—all of these things out of \$105 a month. Yet the Prime Minister rises in his place, raises his hands to heaven and says that the members of this house should not criticize the poor Minister of Labour so much, because the price ceiling on wages must be maintained. Shame on the Prime Minister for making such a statement! We have men working in Canadian industries for the paltry sum of \$100 a month, when we have right in this country huge profits being made—and make no mistake about that.

The Prime Minister went on to speak about the fear of inflation. No word has been so much misused as that word "inflation". Every time the Minister of Finance wants to get out of a jam he uses that word "inflation". We are getting used to it now. The Minister of Finance knows quite well that if you raise the wages of the men in the lower salary brackets you are not going to have inflation. He knows that; the Prime Minister knows it, and so does the Minister of Labour who has just entered the chamber. The Minister of Labour knows very well that if you raise the basic wages of those in the lower wage brackets you are not going to have inflation if you have controlled prices and rationing. The blame is put on the Minister of Labour when he is not the only one to blame. It is the Minister of Finance. Therefore why not put the blame where it belongs. These workers went on strike, but first of all they had tried every other means and had got nowhere. Then this government steps in, always procrastinating and putting things off until a crisis or a strike is upon it. Then it is up against it.

Lest some people, others besides the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Finance, are still fearful of inflation, I will tell them where they can get the money to raise the wages of the workers who are in the lower wage brackets, and then there will not be so many strikes. I was a member of the war expenditures committee. I am not going to discuss the work of that committee, but I should like to quote two of its recommendations, and