

Hon. Mr. BOSTOCK: I want to express my strong objection to dealing with an important measure of this kind on the last day of the session, when we have not had even time to have the Bill printed in the proper form in which it should come to this House. This Bill is brought down here as the result of the work of a committee which has been sitting in the other House; and, if I recollect rightly, the report of that committee was made only a few days ago. I think it is very objectionable that in the very last hours of the session we should be rushing through legislation of this kind which may be very far-reaching in its effects, but which we have not had time to consider. Even the leader of the Government in this House has just admitted that owing to pressure of business with which he has had to deal in the last days of the session, he has not had time to give this Bill the consideration it requires, and inform himself as to its effect, as he does in most cases. I think that the House ought to express very strongly its objection to the Government bringing down important measures of this kind in the very last days of the session. We must all agree to the principle of trying to control the evils that have been revealed through the investigations carried on by commissions appointed by the Government, and by the committee of the other House. Abuses and evils have been shown to exist in the matter of prices and other things which enter very largely into the life of the people of this country. We desire to see those conditions remedied as soon as possible. But when we rush legislation through this House, I doubt very much whether we are doing our work in a way that will be satisfactory to the country, or that will have the permanent benefit desired. I do not think that any honourable gentleman has really had time to study this Bill sufficiently to say how far its provisions will be really effective in dealing with this question.

Hon. Mr. POWER: This is a very important measure, and it comes to us at a very inconvenient hour. The present unsatisfactory condition which, is summed up in the expression, "the high cost of living," has been in existence for at least three years. Statistics go to show that since the first year or two of the war, prices of the necessaries of life, such as food and clothing have gone up in the most abnormal and unnecessary way. This high cost of living is not a new thing. Away back under one of the early English kings, I have forgotten whether it was Edward III or Edward I, certain parties were found

Hon. Mr. POWER.

charging too much for their goods, and a statute was passed punishing severely forstallers and regraters; and in the little province from which I come an Act was passed for this same purpose at the very first session of the legislature, in the year 1758. The Seven Years War was just starting, and certain parties in Halifax having taken advantage of the condition to unduly increase the prices of the necessaries of life, the Legislature promptly dealt with them, and passed an Act penalizing them for their conduct. Here we have not an infant legislature, like that of Nova Scotia, but a great Dominion Parliament, with some twenty ministers, and the condition arises which arose in Nova Scotia, but our Parliament and our Government have not dealt with it in the way in which the Nova Scotia Legislature dealt with the question of that day. The present Government did something that I think was wise: they appointed a Food Controller, and they selected a gentleman who, as the result showed, was very well qualified for the position. He made a report revealing the very serious condition of things, and showing that certain parties had been making immense and unreasonable profits out of the sale of the necessaries of life. But what was the result? Did the Government introduce legislation to stop that condition of things? Not at all: they dismissed or got rid of the Food Controller, and the evils that existed when the Food Controller reported have gone on for two years more, and still continue in a greatly aggravated and intensified form. I really do not see how we can justify a government having twenty ministers, but neglecting essentially important things like the food and clothing supply. The poor people of this country have been paying something like 100 per cent more than they should have paid for their clothing and food; and now, at the eleventh hour, the Government comes forward. The Government, however, with all their ministers and their commissions, did not discover these things for themselves, and their present action is due to what was discovered by the Committee of the House of Commons. Surely the Government, and the commissions they appointed, had really better opportunities to find out what was wrong than had the Commons Committee; yet see the result of half-a-dozen meetings of that committee. I think that nothing that the Government have done is so deserving of condemnation as their neglect of this most important question. At the expiration of five years, they deal with an evil