

lower positions to higher ones as vacancies occur. We always do that in our department.

Mr. MORPHY: In one respect I am forced to disagree with both the minister and the hon. member for North Cape Breton. When we are thinking about the returned soldier we ought to think along lines that will be conducive to his welfare. If a man standing next for promotion in the Civil Service was within military age, physically fit and did not go to the front for his country, it would be monstrous to promote him, no matter what the length of his service might be, and thereby refrain from giving the position to a returned soldier who had done his bit and who was fit for the job.

Mr. GRAHAM: How many correspondents are there?

Mr. CROTHERS: About 70.

Mr. GRAHAM: It is not easy to get good ones, is it?

Mr. CROTHERS: No, we do not pay enough.

Conciliation and Labour Act, including publication, printing, binding and distribution of the Labour Gazette, and allowance to correspondents, and for clerical assistance in preparing tables of statistics, \$35,000.

Mr. MACDONALD: What practical steps has the minister taken to deal with the problem of the high cost of living in Canada? I am aware that an Order in Council was passed in regard to the matter, and that Mr. O'Connor has been employed in that connection, but so far I have been unable to observe that in any part of Canada the Government have taken hold of this problem with any strength or vigour or in such way as to produce results. In Australia, where they have a War Measures Act similar to ours, the Government have taken vast powers and have regulated the cost of staple products which enter into the daily life of the citizens of the country. We have had nothing of that kind here, and I think the minister ought to tell us what he has tried to do, even though he has not succeeded in doing very much, to meet the paramount necessity which exists all over Canada, particularly among the labouring people, of dealing with the exorbitant cost of all the necessaries of life.

Mr. CROTHERS: I have a report in process of preparation, which will be ready in a few days, and which will go into particulars concerning the matter to which

my hon. friend directs attention. However, I do not mind telling him, in a general way, what we have done. The Order in Council, a copy of which I have not at hand, is aimed at preventing restriction of trade, exorbitant prices, combines, and so on. For instance, it makes it obligatory for one who is in possession of articles of food, clothing or fuel—the Order in Council is confined to these three classes of goods—in amounts more than ordinarily necessary for his own use or for carrying on his business, to sell these goods at a fair and reasonable price. We took up the question of coal. We sent to every known coal dealer in Canada a number of questions which were very full and very searching. He was required to say where he bought the coal in the first place, what he paid for it at point of shipment, what the freight cost him, the cost of unloading and selling, and the amount of his overhead expenses. Satisfactory sworn returns were obtained from nearly all the coal dealers in Canada. It was necessary in some cases to communicate with the firms more than once, but in the end I think we got answers to all the questions which were asked. With one or two exceptions we were satisfied that no unreasonable profits were made by the retail dealers in coal. We got statements of prices, and so on, not only from them, but from other sources as well, and were enabled to compare the two, and with the exception of one place, I do not remember that any complaints were made that the people were being overcharged for their coal. Then we took up the price of sugar. We found that an agreement existed between the manufacturers and wholesale and retail men with regard to prices.

After some correspondence, some of these men came to see us, and in many cases, if not in all of them, the practice which we thought objectionable was discontinued. I know one refinery, for instance, that controlled the sale of sugar in two provinces, and only fifty-two men in the two provinces could buy sugar from that refinery, no one being able to purchase sugar from it unless he belonged to the association or complied with the conditions necessary to become a member of the association. We took the matter up; the attorneys general of the provinces consented that a prosecution should be taken against those men, the result being that they came down from their perch and discontinued this objectionable practice. We have investigated the cold