

posure and transportation. Consequently, efforts have been made by this Government and by the previous Government to devise some scientific means whereby that lignite coal could be put in a form not only to be of use in competition with anthracite coal, but to admit of transportation the same as anthracite, and be made available for the consumers of Western Canada, who are now compelled to use mostly anthracite from Pennsylvania. A board was formed in co-operation with the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and appropriations were made to that board, whose duty it was to engage in scientific research in order to devise carbonizing methods, and study the briquetting that follows the carbonizing, in order, if possible, to put the briquetting of lignite coal on a commercial basis where it might succeed. My information is that the results so far obtained by that joint board are very encouraging indeed. It is even intimated that private capital would be disposed now to attack the problem and possibly to relieve the Dominion of further financial obligations, but I have nothing definite to say in that regard. It is, however, a pleasure to me to intimate to Parliament that the members of that board are encouraged by the results so far attained, and hope to be able to reach results more complete which will make certain the commercial success of the briquetting process.

Mr. NESBITT: Has the minister any idea of the actual cost of transport of a ton of coal from Edmonton to Toronto?

Mr. MEIGHEN: I have not definite information, but I rather think the actual cost of transport is now not less than the amount charged. I am inclined to think that the coal rates, generally speaking, are placed as low as they can be placed, unless it is to be assumed that coal must be carried at a loss.

Mr. NESBITT: Is it not a fact that the cost of freight and handling alone would be greater than what we have to pay now for bituminous coal on the other side?

Mr. MEIGHEN: I think it is.

Mr. BURNHAM: Does that take into consideration water transport?

Mr. NESBITT: You have to have water transport for a certain distance.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I could not give the details, but I can assure the hon. member that all these subjects have been most carefully inquired into by those who would

[Mr. Meighen.]

like to develop these mines and to reach the very market the hon. member has in mind. They are the most anxious people of all. There is no doubt in the world that the Edmonton Board of Trade would be delighted beyond measure if some means could be found that would reduce the cost of transportation, possibly at the expense of the Canadian National railways, to such a figure as would bring about a larger area of consumption for the coal of Alberta. We all would like the same thing, but these things must be put on a common sense business basis, and the efforts of the Mines Department are devoted to the finding of ways and means for putting the business on that basis in order that it may be made a success, on its own merits, and not at the expense of failure of some other national enterprise.

It is a fact that at the present time we import into this Dominion huge quantities of anthracite coal and, indeed, of bituminous coal as well. Our importations altogether from the United States last year amounted to \$740,000,000. Of that sum, about \$200,000,000 worth consisted of one article which I do not think it is necessary that I should mention at this moment; but \$61,000,000 represented importations of coal.

Mr. BELAND: Seventy millions.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Sixty-one million dollars. Those are the figures given me by the Department of Trade and Commerce.

Mr. BELAND: I saw it given as \$70,000,000.

Mr. MEIGHEN: It is possible that the hon. gentleman saw the figures for another year terminating in another month. The figures given to me for the year 1919 by the department aggregate \$61,000,000. However, if it were \$70,000,000 my argument would be all the stronger. That is a stupendous sum, to save which it is worth making considerable sacrifice. It is noteworthy as well that while our consumption of coal has kept on increasing during the last few years, our consumption of imported coal has advanced far more rapidly than the consumption of domestic coal. I speak now from memory and am therefore subject to correction, but I think that in five years we have advanced in production of domestic coal from thirteen to fourteen million odd tons, while in the very same time there has been an advance in the use of imported coal from twenty-six to thirty-four million tons—a far greater advance in the consumption of imported coal than of domestic coal.