

*Importation of Fuel*

When the investigation was over and the registrar's report, as contemplated by the statute, was handed to me, two courses were open. I might in my discretion do nothing; or I might send the report of the registrar to the attorney general of the province concerned in order that he might review it, because the provinces are charged not only with the responsibility of administering the criminal laws but with the responsibility of taking proceedings under the Combines Investigation Act if, after they have reviewed the registrar's report, they come to the conclusion that there has been an invasion of the provisions of the statute.

Every bit of evidence including the report was transmitted by me to the province of Quebec as the statute contemplates. I have heard it said, in fact I believe the premier of Quebec is reported to have said, that he has done his duty when Ottawa failed to do it. This government, with meticulous care, right from the beginning instituted the inquiry and followed it up with the transmission of the evidence to the proper authorities in the province of Quebec. They in their judgment, after reviewing the situation, did their duty—yes. They carried on certain proceedings to which I will not make reference because the cases are in the courts to-day.

Then the act further provides that if after the transmission of a report to a province it seems to the law officers of that province, who are charged with the responsibility under the British North America Act of enforcing these laws, that there has been no invasion of the act, and three months elapse and nothing is done, then the federal authorities may still step in and cause an information to be laid, based upon the registrar's report. The province of Quebec, doing what they regarded as their plain duty, based upon the registrar's report and the advice of their law officers, laid certain information against some companies, and those proceedings are now before the courts, and I will go no further in speaking concerning the position of those cases because that is, I think, an invasion of the rules of this chamber. But let me make it clear—and I do not think any member of this house wants to misinterpret my actions or the actions of the government—that right from the beginning of this investigation the federal authority took steps with patient regularity, just as rapidly as they could be taken, to see that the terms of the Combines Investigation Act were carried out.

With respect to the resolution itself, I must again acknowledge that I was unable

[Mr. Gordon.]

to follow the speakers who have preceded me owing to my lack of knowledge of the French language. However, I hope, if I am here another session, that I shall be able to overcome that difficulty.

Mr. LAPOINTE: You are doing very well.

Mr. GORDON: One part of the address made by the hon. member for St. Mary (Mr. Deslauriers) had reference I believe to the admission by Canada of Russian coal. It is true that the federal government has excluded the importation of that fuel, one of the reasons being that that coal is being mined by forced and convict labour. That is not denied. Another reason is that we have developed a very large business with Great Britain, which is in competition with the anthracite fields of the United States. No one will deny that the price of anthracite coal has been very materially reduced in the last four years; whether it should be reduced further is something that I am not able to answer. But at any rate we do know that there is the keenest kind of competition in that business to-day between British and United States anthracite dealers.

I wonder whether the member for St. Mary, when he advocates the admission of Russian coal and condemns the government for the action they took, would also condemn the government for banning the admission of Russian pulpwood, concerning which the province of Quebec and the operators there have definite views. The reason Russian pulpwood was excluded was this. It is well known, it is admitted, that particularly in the northern sections of Russia the lumbering operations are carried on by convict and forced labour. I wonder if the government are to be commended or condemned because they banned the importation of Russian pulpwood and pulp and products of that character when we knew and the industry knew and the bush operator knew and the workmen knew that any price at which Canadian pulp might be sold would be undercut by the Russian pulpwood operators, who were carrying on their business by forced and convict labour.

The present administration has seen fit to subsidize or enlarge the subsidies with respect to Canadian coal. Some have criticized us for so doing; it may be that the government is open to some criticism, but I think I can safely say that if this administration had not given assistance to the coal industry, particularly of Nova Scotia, there probably would be no coal produced in that province to-day.