

Combines Investigation Act

section, which, I think, should be considered as the very cornerstone of the act, is now disregarded.

Now I come to the present Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent). If anyone had told me that a great lawyer and great jurist—sometimes the two are different—with his experience as Minister of Justice and all the other qualities we like and admire in him, would do this sort of thing, I would have scoffed at it; I would have said, "Don't be silly; go roll your hoop". But what do we find? Not only does the Prime Minister not join in the criticism, but there is no suggestion of an apology for what has been done. I should like to read what he said, indicating his generous attitude toward the Minister of Justice in sharing responsibility with him. I like that attitude; but I should like the Prime Minister to think something about the people of Canada as well as about the Minister of Justice. What consideration was given them when all this was going on? What does the Prime Minister say, at page 1526 of *Hansard*:

And I now feel it is only fair to the Minister of Justice that I should inform the house that he had discussed these matters with me, and I had concurred in the line of conduct he was adopting. I should bear, therefore, a portion of the responsibility, if there is responsibility—

That is good; get that.

—if there is responsibility, for attempting to carry out the implied or expressed undertaking given to Canadian industries.

That was the Prime Minister. These people have been caught red-handed; and when I say "caught" perhaps that is the right word, because it is suggested that if it had not been for Mr. McGregor we might not have known about this even yet. No one can prove that is so, but neither can anyone prove it is not so.

Mr. Garson: That does not stop you from saying it, because it cannot be proved.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): It is said by serious people; and that is not surprising, because when people see the sort of thing that has been done here inevitably it gives rise to certain suspicion. I regret to say that to the Minister of Justice, because I might add here that I never would have believed he would be a party to this sort of thing. As I said, I feel that this has been a great conspiracy against the constitution; and do not let us regard "constitution" as a long, abstract word. I mean this has been a conspiracy against our way of life, against the method we have adopted of living together. When this breach of the law, this suspension of the execution of the law, is carried out without excuse and without apology—I should not say without excuse, but without reason—it gives rise to suspicion.

[Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood).]

So far as I can see, there really has been no attempt to meet the real question. The ministers went up various blind alleys, but they did not deal with the real point. I think I am correct in saying that no serious attempt has been made to answer the accusation of suspension of the execution of the law. That is what I mean when I say that I consider there has been a conspiracy against the law; and the worst of it is that the conspiracy has been carried out by men whom we like and want to trust, men of reputation. One of the few Latin quotations I remember from the many hours I spent studying that language is *corruptio optimi pessima*, which means that there is nothing so bad as a very good thing when it is corrupted.

So I say this has been a conspiracy against the constitution. I do not think we would have been so much worried if it had been carried on by a lot of men with no reputation, who could have been easily disregarded by the public, who would have carried no weight. What bothers me is that men of high reputation—and deservedly so—come into this house with no apology to offer for doing what Charles I lost his head for.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have spoken longer than I had intended; I am afraid perhaps my feelings have run away with me a little, but I do feel very deeply about this. I do not think it is any joke. I thought many of the things that were said in defence of the government's action were trivial in the extreme. As I have said, I believe we are living in a time of danger. The other day I read a book by one of the greatest living scholars in which the future of parliament was discussed. He felt that it was an open question whether parliament and parliamentary government as we have it could survive for very long. He pointed out that it had given indigestion to nearly all the European countries that had tried to absorb it, and that it is in effect over a very small portion of the earth's surface; and I recall once more what I said about communism and the answer to it.

I cannot hope that my words will carry far, but I express the earnest hope that the press, the pulpit and the universities of this country will not let this matter rest, that leaders of public opinion will so deal with it that no government ever again will dare take similar action. This government has given no assurance, no apology, no promise for the future. I hope what has been done here will become sufficiently registered in the public mind so that the expression of public opinion will be such that no government in future will dare repeat what has been done here.