

board. It will be recalled that in the textile case, for instance, they made application to the board. They applied first to the minister to refer the case to the board, but he did not do it of his own motion, and then the parties applied to the board through the minister. As the minister himself pointed out the other day, the finance minister has certain rights. He can decide whether or not he will refer any question at all to the board. In this instance, if my memory serves me, and I have not read the case recently, they applied to the minister to refer it to the board.

Mr. DUNNING: And he did so under part I.

Mr. BENNETT: Under part one, of course, there is no public judgment delivered, but the report goes back to the minister.

Mr. DUNNING: I have no trouble except with references other than under part I.

Mr. BENNETT: There would be no difficulty when the house was not in session, and the difficulty in this case, I take it, is that the minister did not have a longer time than fifteen days within which to consider the report before tabling it. That is a short way of putting the difficulty. I will look up the act, but my recollection of the discussions that took place in the house at the time is that if the report of the board to the minister was delivered while parliament was in session the minister was required to lay it on the table within fifteen days after that in order that the house might be seized of it, and the argument was that the house should become informed of the whole situation before the budget was delivered.

It is not incumbent upon the minister to follow the findings of the board at all. He can do as he pleases, as he pointed out the other day. But the argument was that the house should have the opportunity fully to acquaint itself with the report made to the minister in order that when the budget was delivered they might know to what extent his judgment was influenced by the finding of the board. I think that was the argument that was made, but the minister himself was not then in the house. His honoured colleague who sits to his left perhaps will inform him as to the attitude taken by his own friends at that particular time. I think the act meets this as far as it is possible to do so, having regard to all the circumstances.

The minister referred to another matter the other day, the extent to which the private operations of business concerns should become

[Mr. Bennett.]

known to competitors. He stated that he had to meet this question in connection with one of these cases—I believe it was the gasoline inquiry. I think it is fair to say that in practice this board has carried out its work with a good deal of satisfaction to those who have had occasion to have recourse to it. It takes time to establish the smooth running of an institution such as this, but I believe in the main it has given very patient consideration to every case referred to it and to the applications made under part II of the act.

Mr. DUNNING: I apologize for taking up time, but this is a matter of some considerable importance. I made the reference I did to the fifteen days because of the fact that we are here by virtue of the Tariff Board Act grafting a new branch on to a very old institution, the institution of the budget in accordance with British plan and British tradition of what a budget should be. We all know how carefully guarded the budget is and must be if we are to avoid speculation on the part of the public, informed or uninformed. The traditional secrecy surrounding what is to be contained in the budget is, I take it, a matter of vital importance to our system.

Mr. BENNETT: Ours is better than the corresponding British one.

Mr. DUNNING: I think it is. If one could visualize the gasoline report of the board being brought down in this house two or three weeks before the budget, one could also visualize the volume of speculation of an unhealthy kind which might take place.

Mr. BENNETT: Forestalling, as they call it in England.

Mr. DUNNING: I believe we would be into the American system of tariff making, that is unless it became known that the government was not likely to accept recommendations from the tariff board. In such a case the usefulness of the tariff board would be impaired. If it were known that the government was very likely to accept recommendations from the tariff board, if public confidence in that board had grown to such a point that in almost every case the government accepted its report, then the tabling of a report in advance of the budget would be tantamount to advertising in advance a change in the scale of taxation on the date the budget was to be brought down.

Mr. BENNETT: I think the previous government adopted every recommendation made.