

Hon. Mr. COTÉ: If he had the powers, the preliminary inquiry might become an investigation on a large scale. Is it necessary for the commissioner to have such powers, for a preliminary inquiry? Should his powers not be restricted to checking up on the complaints? He could communicate with the parties concerned, and form his opinion as to whether the answers he received were well founded or not, before recommending anything to the Minister. If he has the powers provided here, he would have to exercise a judicial discretion. That is to say, this official of the Department would be doing what a judge would do if called upon to say whether there was sufficient evidence to warrant the larger investigation. And if the judge gave a fiat, the larger investigation would then be carried on, under the Minister's authority, as provided for in the Bill.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: It would be hardly a fiat; it would be approval.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: Mr. McGregor, do I understand that in seven or eight years you investigated about 400 concerns?

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Not concerns.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: Complaints.

Mr. MCGREGOR: Complaints of one kind and another have been received to about that number. Some of them have resulted in very little more than an exchange of a few letters. In many cases, on approaching the companies we have found there was no justification for going any further. In some cases there have been only complaints from individuals, and we have discouraged the filing of a formal application.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: I understand that you proceeded to investigate in only about 20 or 25 cases.

Mr. MCGREGOR: What we regard as important investigations would number probably about 25.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: As to the others, those that you did not investigate so fully as you did in the 25 cases, how many did you investigate to the extent of calling witnesses and having documents produced, and that kind of thing?

Mr. MCGREGOR: I should judge that in perhaps another 50 cases we have made some investigation.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: Do I understand that in those 50 cases you proceeded to make investigations and had witnesses examined under oath?

Mr. MCGREGOR: No.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: Did you have them produce their books and investigate their books?

Mr. MCGREGOR: Not in an informal procedure. In most of those 50 cases that I speak of the inquiries were still of an informal character.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: What would such an inquiry consist of?

Mr. MCGREGOR: Conferences with the heads of the concerns who were charged.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: Any production of documents?

Mr. MCGREGOR: We asked them to produce documents.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: In those documents were there books?

Mr. MCGREGOR: Yes.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: You investigated their books?

Mr. MCGREGOR: In their offices.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: Did you have any of their employees put under oath?

Mr. MCGREGOR: In some cases, yes.

Hon. Mr. BEAUBIEN: And you proceeded with an investigation in their offices?

Mr. MCGREGOR: In their offices, sometimes in a central place.