

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: No. I did not give that answer.

Mr. LANDERYOU: He said there was no evidence.

Mr. McGEER: As I understand the minister, this is a special type of loaning activity under a special rate of interest, that is not engaged in by the banks; but I venture to say that if the banks were offered this rate of interest there would probably be another story to tell. And when the proposal is made that we are going to have a parliamentary investigation, which must be the royalist of all royal commissions—

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: No, no.

Mr. McGEER: I am sorry that the Banking and Commerce committee has fallen so low in the estimation of the minister—

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: It has not. I am afraid lest it may.

Mr. McGEER: This most important of all committees in parliament, the Banking and Commerce committee, apparently is not competent, in the minister's estimation, to investigate small loan companies.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: No, Mr. Chairman, I must rise to a point of order. My hon. friend knows perfectly well what a point of order is. He knows I have not said anything of the sort, nor implied it. If he wants the full force of my statement in the record—I did not amplify it—I said a special select committee—

Mr. McGEER: Because the conduct of this committee for obvious reasons—

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: No, no; not the conduct of this committee; but for obvious reasons this committee is unsuitable. I will tell my hon. friend the obvious reasons. This is a very large committee of parliament. It is one of the largest committees of parliament. You have seen, and the record of attendance will show, that there has not been a steady attendance of members. We have tonight the spectacle of Mr. McGeer coming back and asking questions the replies to which are already on the record. This is not the first time that has happened. I am not speaking in respect of Mr. McGeer any more than with respect to others. It is one of the known faults of a large committee investigating a specific subject for investigation, and I think Mr. McGeer will agree with me that for studying and developing evidence on such a complex matter a smaller body than this committee is desirable and necessary if a conclusion is to be reached. That is the obvious reason which I meant when I said that obviously the Banking and Commerce committee was not suitable for the purpose. I think the discussion as it has been carried on is ample evidence that you cannot investigate a complex matter by means of a public meeting; you have to have a smaller body.

Mr. McGEER: It is unfortunate that we have some very good records in this committee. It was this committee that settled and determined the provisions of the Bank of Canada bill. Surely a committee that was competent to investigate, report and recommend to the House of Commons on the Bank of Canada legislation ought still to be competent to advise the House of Commons on small loan companies. If that is the only obvious reasons why this committee cannot investigate small loaning activities, I must submit, Mr. Chairman, that the reason is a pretty thin one.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: It will be in the judgment of the House of Commons. The house will determine it. It does not matter what Mr. McGeer or I think of the matter. The House of Commons will determine what committee will handle the matter.

Mr. McGEER: I want to say that when I came to this House of Commons I came here to perform what I thought was a public duty, and as long as I have the right to stand in the well of the House of Commons or in any committee I will ask in any investigation of this kind the questions which I think ought to be answered.