

The Budget—Mr. Argue

freedom. Without both of those forces we would not be where we are today; and without both of them we shall not continue to thrive and prosper.

This country is founded on the bedrock of free enterprise. The president of the Canadian Pulp and Paper Association may choose to call this "the law of the jungle". But does he really believe that it would be an improvement to permit the lions and the tigers to form a combine? I am certain that the other inhabitants of the jungle would not agree with him.

The aim of the combines legislation is to protect the public interest in free competition. Those who are trying shortcuts have no licence to exploit or to profiteer, nor will they be granted one. They are jeopardizing free enterprise from within by their greed and lack of initiative. Combines, if allowed a free hand, can become a new form of government at a different level. This result we cannot permit.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson), in carrying out the wishes of parliament under the combines act, has shown high political courage. His outlook has been oriented to the present and the future, and he has not failed to understand the political climate of the day. His industry, sincerity and devotion to the public interest is demonstrated by his insistence that business relearn and apply the fundamental principles of competition to the home market and to the highly competitive foreign market. For that insistence he has earned the commendation of this house.

If we are not timid tomorrow and do not waver in applying this philosophy, the future will reward us by providing for this country greater markets and a yet higher standard of living for our people.

Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, in the speech he delivered this afternoon the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) called on the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) and the federal government to have another conference with the ten premiers of the provinces of Canada. From the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition it was not clear just what purpose such a conference might serve. Surely it would be a waste of time for the premiers from nine of the provinces to sit in on a conference that was discussing the "beefs" of Premier Duplessis of Quebec. I therefore do not understand what was in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition, as to just what kind of conference it would be or what would be discussed. I think the most significant aspect of this discussion on dominion-provincial relations, particularly the action of Premier Duplessis in Quebec, is

[Mr. Croll.]

the silence of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has not yet, to my knowledge, made any public statement on this controversial matter. Because he is the Prime Minister and also because he is from the province of Quebec, I believe he owes it to the country to discuss this question on the floor of the house.

I am not opposed to the calling of a dominion-provincial conference; in fact I think a great deal of good might come from such a conference. But I believe its discussions should centre around problems that must be solved and solved soon. I think such a conference should consider what is to be done about the half a million unemployed in Canada. The federal government might tell such a conference what plans, if any, it has with respect to a shelf of public works. Such a conference might usefully spend its time discussing what is to be done with the huge surplus of grain and the crisis that now faces agricultural producers. I say that if such a conference takes place it should consider solutions to the very great economic problems facing the country at this time and should not merely consider the "beefs" of one particular provincial premier.

As time has passed during this session, the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) has made it more clear all the time to anyone who knows anything about conditions in western Canada that agriculture there faces very serious difficulties indeed. He announced that a seven bushel per acre quota was the most that farmers could hope to deliver and, as a matter of fact, he said it was something that should make everybody happy. But it was the worst news that western Canada has had in many years. This is a return to the situation in 1929 when huge surpluses of grain were going unwanted. Our farmers have been good producers. Nature has been kind. They have produced good crops, but because of policies followed by the government they now find it impossible to market their crops.

The Minister of Trade and Commerce rises in his seat periodically and says that everything is fine, that farmers are earning large incomes and that sales are good, but these statements are not borne out by the facts. The wheat economy in Canada is in a crisis right now, and that crisis is spilling over into other fields. If you want to correct unemployment in Canada, put some purchasing power in the pockets of western farmers. Take steps to buy their grain, and in my opinion there will be no unemployment in a matter of a few short months.

Letters coming to western members of parliament in increasing numbers now show