

a few remarks on this measure. I do not intend to administer anything in the way of criticism of its provisions one by one. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, if I find myself unable to agree with the printed bill I will not be able to glorify its authors with the same meek humility and partisan credulity of some hon. members. I was indeed amused at the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George (Mr. Marler). He reviewed the measure, took one feature and then another, showed to his own satisfaction that they were wholly wrong, told us that the bill aimed at repressing evil and unjust combinations, but that its actual provisions had the effect instead, of repressing good combinations; but notwithstanding all that was wrong about the bill, he was quite certain that it proceeded out of a pure and holy source.

When the resolution was before the House I reviewed very briefly the history of our anti-combine legislation so called. I am going to ask the House to bear with me while I do so again, because although we may take this section and that section and say it does not read as if it would be effective, or that it does, yet we cannot get a comprehensive view of the real question we are discussing except in the light of the history of this legislation from the earliest times.

Hon. gentlemen talk of agreeing with the principle of this bill, and then end their speeches without the slightest indication of what they conceive the principle of the bill to be. I was indeed anxious to learn from the hon. member who has just sat down (Mr. Healy) what is this principle as to which he expresses such profound approval, in the presence of which he is going to vote for the bill, no matter what its form—in other words what its provisions may be. What is this sacred, sanctimonious principle?

Mr. HEALY: A square deal to everyone in this country.

Mr. MEIGHEN: Well, if such is the principle of the bill how is it that it does not do this for the hon. gentleman's constituents, the Ford Company?

Mr. HEALY: I believe it does in principle and in final result, but it is the form of putting it in operation that I criticize.

Mr. MEIGHEN: What is the difference about the form if the result is all right? Where does this kind of talk get us? I think it was Mr. Balfour who stated that the most foul smelling of platitudes was this continual talk about "a square deal and justice" with no reference to specific enactments.

This bill, to my mind, instead of being a measure seeking to get concrete results is a measure distinctly seeking to avoid them. I believe a recital of our legislation will show that wherever in the past we have had provisions that really stretched forth and caught somebody they are left out of this bill, but everything is here which is going to pile harassments, vexation and expense on legitimate business; that is all in the measure—investigation after investigation, circle after circle, but never any goal.

In 1888 parliament sought first to enact anti-combine legislation and a committee sat to work out some effective measure. It was passed in 1889, with amendments in 1892 and, I am inclined to think, a further amendment later, all of them as to the wording varying the original act in very slight form. The act of 1889 constitutes what is now clause 498 of our Criminal Code. In 1910 parliament enacted the Combines Investigations Act supplementary to that provision of the Criminal Code, which provision has been in our law ever since it was enacted in 1889.

The Combines Investigations Act had for its object the investigating of such institutions as six persons alleged to constitute a combine. "Combine" was defined, but not in the terms of this bill. The definition of the word in this bill I will deal with later. It is taken almost verbatim from the definition in a subsequent act. The Combines Investigations Act, however, proved to be aimless legislation, it proved to reach out to no real result.

Hon. gentlemen have spoken—the hon. member for Cape Breton (Mr. Carroll), I remember particularly—about the law's delay, the procrastination of our courts, and he pleaded for a measure like this that gets at investigation in a simple way and, according to his idea, more expeditiously. Well, under the Combines Investigation Act, the provisions for investigation under which were much the same as this, there was only one investigation. Instead of being expeditious the investigation lived out the whole length of the dying days of one government and well through the young virility of the next and ended in nothing but mist. I refer to the investigation into the United Shoe Machinery Company. It provided for investigation, provided for the summoning of witnesses—all sorts of inquisition—and finally provided for a verdict. Then, if there was to be any punishment, if there was to be any injunction, if there was to be any variation of practice on the part of the "combinester," the whole process had to be gone over again