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CANADA

House of Commons Debates

OFFICIAL REPORT

SPEECH

OF

RIGHT HON. ARTHUR MEIGHEN

ON

CUSTOMS INQUIRY COMMITTEE

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THURSDAY JUNE 24, 1926

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): The House is nearing the close of a debate which is certain to become historic, and nearing decision on a great work and a great problem, perhaps the most important in its bearing upon the future of our country with which parliament has dealt for the last twenty years. By reason of the vastness of the subject and the wide scope of the investigation, it is almost impossible for members even to read the evidence adduced, to say nothing of being in such command of it as to bring to decision upon all its features that full information which the occasion demands. The Prime Minister has just concluded a very laboured defence of the administration and his minister; and I will deal with his remarks with the respect which his office demands, with the respect which I owe to him and have always felt for him. But I commence with this promise, that it will be my endeavour through every sentence which I utter, to keep just as far as I can from his method and his style.

I join with many hon. members who have spoken in a word of recognition of the very great toil which has been given to this work by the committee. I doubt if any committee of parliament in a generation ever had a subject to cover which involved so much real

work, so much patience, so much concentration, as the subject to which this committee has given its energies for something over four months. Having read practically all the evidence, and having read part of it many times, while I cannot agree in all the judgments given by the chairman, I believe he yielded to a minimum of party proclivity, and on the whole was fair. I say most unreservedly that he devoted himself with an assiduity to the great task which deserves the commendation of all. The last thing which would occur to me to do would be to allow my speech to be charged with that censure of the committee which characterized the last sentences of the Prime Minister's address. The Prime Minister is very laudatory of the recommendations of the committee, so long as one does not read them or go into the real meaning of the findings and the recommendations, but for the conduct of the committee in general he has nothing but abuse. It has been unfair, he says—unfair especially to his late colleague! That committee, he says, allowed evidence to be adduced against him and never called him to defend himself. He upbraids the unfairness especially, he says, of the Conservative members of the committee for not calling the Hon. Jacques Bureau in his own defence. I have practised

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