

pointed to look into the possible, alleged or presumed existence of a combine. That is what the whole inquiry was about. From this side of the house it has been made clear from the outset that the whole administration under the Combines Investigation Act is directed toward one specific end, namely, that of discovering combines. It is not for discovering causes of rising prices outside the Combines Investigation Act altogether.

Another criticism levelled at the government in connection with this motion is that the scope of the committee is not wide enough. Hon. members opposite say the scope is not wide enough, and there have been amendments moved to enlarge its scope. What is the scope? It is the causes of the recent rise in the cost of living. You can take it all in that one paragraph, if you like. The paragraph is all-embracing as to whatever affects the increased cost of living. Can anyone suggest any wider scope than that? To discover the cause of the rise in the cost of living, can anyone give wider scope than is contained in that one sentence where, without any limitation or without being circumscribed in any way, the committee is given power to investigate every possible cause?

A number of things have been mentioned by hon. members opposite in their amendments—policies, subsidies, and what-not. Any one of those things they have mentioned, if it is responsible for the rise in the cost of living, can be investigated by the committee under the clause I have mentioned. The purpose in introducing those amendments could not have been to widen the scope. If accepted, they would only have served to narrow it, if anything, by directing the attention of the committee to certain specific things. The committee might then have felt that it should give its time to those specific things, rather than to the all-embracing question it is asked to investigate.

So far as the subject matter of the amendments relate to causes of the increase in the cost of living, whether due to government policies, subsidies or anything else, they will be under investigation; and those matters are adequately taken care of by the first clause in the motion. These are all involved in the investigation; and to introduce other factors is simply to destroy the purpose of the motion.

No, Mr. Speaker, the amendments have not been made to enlarge the scope of the committee. They have been made to change the purpose of the investigation. The committee is to be appointed to gather facts and to get information so that this House

of Commons and the country may be clearly and fully informed. But the movers of the amendments say, in so many words, "no, that is not what we wish this committee to do; we wish the committee to discuss policy. We do not want it to discover facts. We do not want this committee to obtain information; we do not want it to give us facts. As a matter of fact, we do not want the committee at all." That is perfectly clear from one motion which was put, and to which I made reference today. I hope my hon. friends opposite will not take objection if I refer to it again. The motion by the leader of the C.C.F. was to the effect that all the words after "that" in the motion be stricken out and that there be substituted therefor a certain declaration of policy or opinion which the amendment contained. In other words, the contribution made by the C.C.F. in their second amendment was to the effect that we ought to have no committee at all to investigate the causes of the rise in prices, but that any committee that might be formed should be diverted to something else altogether.

Mr. KNOWLES: Yes, action.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Now, if my hon. friend would just try to restrain himself. I know he likes to appear before the public from day to day by his interruptions.

Mr. KNOWLES: By your attitude you admit that we are right.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: He is not by any means making the impression either upon the house or the public generally that he thinks his utterances make, when he interrupts other speakers.

As I have said, the purpose was not that. Another purpose brought forth clearly by some of the amendments proposed was that we should give this committee power to make policy and recommendations involving the expenditure of large sums of public money. Here again we have another example of what I was speaking of before as tendencies in this debate which are evidence of the change that is coming over the thinking of some hon. members with reference to British parliamentary procedure and practice. It is something that we ought to consider most carefully.

The rules of this house have been framed, and the practices of parliament up to the present have been framed, amongst other things, to protect the public treasury, and not to make it possible for any group in parliament to have large sums of money taken out of the public treasury because they themselves

[Mr. Mackenzie King]