

government itself. They have taken advantage of labour's lack of understanding of the constitution and laws of this country. When they approach the Department of Munitions and Supply that department says that they have a ruling from the Department of Justice that they could not enter into an agreement with the unions. I am not learned in the law, but I am satisfied there is no law which prevents the Department of Munitions and Supply from entering into agreements with trade unions, and I doubt very much if the Department of Justice ever gave any such ruling. If the Department of Justice did so, it was doing something which it knew was wrong.

About this time last year, shortly after the house adjourned I received a letter from the head of an important trade union. He stated that his union had received bargaining rights in the industry in which they were concerned through an election in the plant held under Department of Labour auspices. After a conciliation board had made an award they were told by the Minister of Labour that the controller in that industry could not enter into an agreement with the union.

Mr. HOMUTH: What date was that?

Mr. MacINNIS: July, 1941. I have not the letter before me, but I placed part of it on the record last year. Here is what the Minister of Labour said:

I believe that you will understand that Mr. Brunning, as controller, could not negotiate with the union as a union, or sign an agreement with a union, but the regulations which are agreed upon between all parties should form fair and reasonable conditions under which the work of the plant should be carried on.

Mr. HOMOUTH: By whom was that signed?

Mr. MacINNIS: That was signed by the former minister of labour, the present Secretary of State (Mr. McLarty): I drew that to the attention of the former minister of labour, I think it was last November. I quoted the section in order in council P.C. 2685 and I then asked the minister how his reply could be harmonized with the principle laid down in that order in council. This is his reply:

My hon. friend, however, brings up a question which has given me a considerable measure of worry, and one that I intend to ask the national war labour board to consider at the earliest possible moment when it starts its activities. I think my hon. friend and the committee know pretty well the situation in Great Britain; no union in government departments is recognized that is in affiliation with any outside union. In the United States the situation is a little different. They do recognize in some instances, and some only, unions that are affiliated with outside unions.

I do not know where the former Minister of Labour got his information in regard to the situation in Great Britain, but I know that he was incorrectly informed. I wrote to the general secretary of the trades union congress, Sir Walter Citrine, quoting the statement of the former Minister of Labour. I had a reply from Sir Walter Citrine under date of April 24, 1942. Just a few days ago the Minister of Labour was asked how many government controlled industries in Canada had agreements with organized labour, and he gave his answer in one word, "None." I quote from Sir Walter Citrine's letter as follows:

Thank you for your letter of the 19th of March, which I received yesterday, in which you raise questions as to the extent of recognition afforded the British trade unions by the government and government-controlled industries. In the first instance I would like to clear up the point which was made by your Minister of Labour to the effect that "the situation in Great Britain is that no union in government departments is recognized that is in affiliation with any outside union". This statement apparently refers to the operation of the 1927 trade union and trade disputes act which prohibits established civil servants from belonging to any trade union except those which confine their membership to persons employed permanently in an established capacity by or under the crown; and also prohibits such civil service trade unions from affiliating to organizations which include non-civil servants. That act, however, does not prohibit employees of either government factories or government-controlled establishments, i.e., royal ordnance factories, etc., from becoming members of their appropriate trade union, and these employees are, in fact, enrolled in such unions as the amalgamated engineering union, the transport and general workers' union, the national union of general and municipal workers, and a score or so of others, all of whom are affiliated to the trades union congress.

It is perfectly true that we do not enter into trade union agreements concerning wages and conditions direct with the minister of labour as that ministry holds no responsibility for government factories. But trade unions do conduct negotiations with the ministry of supply, and the admiralty, for example, who are themselves employers of labour responsible for the management of factories, dockyards, and workshops. Most industries here it will be appreciated are privately owned, and wages negotiations are primarily a matter for regulation between the employers and the trade unions concerned.

The right of the trades union congress and its affiliated unions to represent the viewpoint of the workers on all matters affecting their conditions was established with the government in the early days of the war, when the then Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, instructed his departmental officers to consult the trades union congress and its affiliated organizations on all matters affecting their interests. That policy was reaffirmed by Mr. Winston Churchill and has been constantly adhered to, and has been reflected in the many consultative committees which have been set