

fruit in the prairie provinces; there would be no competition to hold down the price that the Americans chose to ask for their fruit, they would ask just exactly what they liked, and the prairie consumer could just take it or leave it.

The report proceeds to explain these wonderful Nash interests which the commissioner was instructed to investigate, how they consist of 45 incorporated companies in Canada, in close affiliation with 84 incorporated companies south of the line. They were by way of being jobbers, and such a combination of jobbers would be a pretty substantial economic unit for any other trade interests to compete against; but it becomes a far more venomous creature to deal with when within that combine of jobbers there is set up a combine of brokers, because those brokers are then able to receive produce, peddle it out to their own friends, their own houses, charge their commissions and, as is shown, in many instances in the report make unfair merchandising profits en route. There was one instance where one manager told another manager that December had been a good month—they had cleared \$30,000 in one district office. Imagine that,—\$30,000! Supposing that were made up for broker's commissions, what an enormous quantity of fruit that would mean if it was handled in the one month of December!

I do not want to go further into the report at this stage. I commend its perusal to every hon. member. In it he will find light and entertaining reading, he will find once more that fact is a good deal stranger than fiction; and if he takes any interest in the sports page of American newspapers he will be interested in the slang which these brigands use among themselves. But before leaving the report I want to draw attention to the final remark of the commissioner in part one, where he says:

There is evidence to the effect that the remedy for many of the undoubted evils of the present situation is the formation of a growers' selling agency for sale direct to the various jobbers.

I refer to that because I have heard it stated on more than one occasion that the formation of a Canadian fruit distributors' agency only means doing away with one combine and the substitution of another. That view, I think, is based on misinformation. What the fruit growers propose is that the co-operative associations all over Canada should come together and place their own brokers in the field. I need hardly explain that that does not constitute a combine injurious to the consumer, because between those brokers and the consumer stands the jobber. The desire of the fruit grower is not to make commissions, it is

to effect the largest possible distribution of his fruit at such a price as the trade will stand. It is no good his boosting the price, because it will reduce the amount of fruit distributed to the consumer. And I would remind hon. members that the domestic market is of far more value to the British Columbia fruit grower than any of the export markets of the world.

The situation now is, I think that some time ago the hon. Minister of Labour (Mr. Murdock) went fishing; he has just landed his first fish; it is called a combine; now that it is wriggling on the bank; it is seen to be an injurious combine; it is of no use to the producer, it is harmful to the retailer, it is unfit for human consumption. But he has seated himself on the ground beside it and he believes that according to the terms of his license it is necessary for him to wait three months to see whether someone will come along and scotch his fish. In the meantime the fruit grower is desperately anxious lest this fish should flop back into the water, and recommence its depredations up and down the creek.

Mr. MURDOCK: Might I ask the hon. gentleman, is he in a position to give me his opinion, or the opinion of any legal gentleman of his party, that the federal government has, as a result of the passage of the Combines Investigation Act, any authority whatever to take the action that I am sure my hon. friend would like to have taken and that he has a right to expect will be taken—can he give me the opinion of any hon. legal gentleman on his side of the House that we can go and do the thing that he wants done and that should be done?

Mr. STIRLING: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I have not the Combines Investigation Act before me. I am strongly of the opinion that there is nothing whatever to prevent the federal government from proceeding along this line. But I would suggest that the hon. minister obtain the opinion of two of the legal lights of the ministry. I say the fruit grower is desperately afraid lest this evil thing should again get in his way. It is the more important that action be taken without delay because within the last three days I hear that the Associated Growers of British Columbia have taken the very strong step of forming their own brokerage offices in the three prairie provinces. Now, it is always a strong step to start out in a territory that has been hitherto served by a well established chain of offices. In this case it is a doubly strong step to take because this combine has not yet