

Combines Investigation Act

certain events under the heading "Law-breaking ministers", I find this in the issue to which I refer:

It is a most dangerous attitude and one which, if allowed to go unrebuked, will extend eventually to even more important matters, if that be possible.

That the report was unjust to the milling industry, and that the government would have been ill-advised to take action upon it, is in our opinion entirely true, but has nothing to do with the case. The law does not say that the government may suppress any report by the commissioner which causes it uneasiness, or with which it disagrees, or which it thinks likely to cause undue agitation in the public mind. The law says that the reports of the commissioner shall be made public within fifteen days; and the whole object of that provision was, as our Ottawa correspondent pointed out last week, to put the reports beyond the reach of any possible political pressures.

In the United Kingdom, we do not hesitate to state, the unearthing of a situation such as this would lead to the resignation of at least the minister chiefly concerned. If the political atmosphere of Canada were as healthy as that of the United Kingdom—if electors demanded the same standards of their responsible rulers, and if rulers had the same sense of obligation to parliament and to the country—the same result would follow here.

This is not an overstatement of the seriousness of the situation with which we are confronted, and the attitude of the minister. If the minister had said: I came to Ottawa only on January 3; the report had been presented on December 29, and I remained in the west to clean up certain details; when I came here I was confronted with the necessity of preparing for parliament and I was not able to attend to this for a while; as Minister of Justice I have no discretion in regard to publication, but I did want to know something of what it was about; therefore, there was some delay which I regret. If this had been said, every hon. member would have agreed that we could not be critical of so reasonable a position. This default is continued, however, and when the explanation is given it is clear that the Minister of Trade and Commerce did not want the report published, and the Minister of Justice was not prepared to create an issue such as would have resulted, under our system, in the resignation of the minister. That is the situation.

Instead, however, the minister comes here and says he is assuming the responsibility. This morning he says, in effect, that a thing of this kind will not happen again; remember that on this occasion I did not have an opportunity of reading the report before publication. Why should he, unless he believes he should have an opportunity of reading it before it is in final form? What does that mean? Is there any hon. member who can misinterpret what the minister has in mind, that the report should be the subject of discussion before it is published? The purpose of publication was stated by the one who

moved in this house the insertion of that section of the act, Mr. Mackenzie King. In his explanation of the purpose, he emphasized the prophylactic power of publication, and the independence of the officials in carrying out what they thought to be the necessary exposure of the conditions they had found, without the intervention of the government or any member of the government. That was the intention of this idea of publication. I believe it should be carried out.

I could easily put into the minister's mouth words in the form of verse which do seem to sum up his attitude. He will find them in Gilbert and Sullivan's "Iolanthe":

The law is the true embodiment
Of everything that's excellent.
It has no kind of fault or flaw,
And I, my lords, embody the law.

In other words, never mind what parliament has passed; never mind what the responsibility is under the acts that those elected by the people pass; if we think anything might result from this with which we do not agree, then we will assume the responsibility as members of the government for changing the law, in effect if not in actual words.

I heard a comment a moment ago about quoting Gilbert and Sullivan which was not loud enough for the reporter to hear. As a matter of fact, Gilbert and Sullivan might well be quoted in respect to certain aspects of this matter. There is another reference to Gilbert and Sullivan which might be applied to another minister. I believe he well occupies the role of Pooh-Bah in another famous play which perhaps is better known than "Iolanthe". Nevertheless the fact that the ministerial Pooh-Bah is running not only his own department but the Department of Justice as well is no explanation for the Minister of Justice waiting ten months to get on his feet and resist that overriding power, with the qualifications he made, as soon as he had found out what it was all about.

For ten months, the government has been in contempt, and deliberate contempt, of parliament. The longer the explanations are that are put before us, the more it is emphasized why this government still thinks it had the right to break the law under the circumstances which existed at that time. If that explanation is sound, then it applies to other responsibilities of the government. If that explanation is sound, we have no way of knowing whether there are any other reports that should have been made or any other things this government should have done which it has failed to do under the