

*Combines—Mr. Healy*

Robertson, and another member from London, Mr. Ford, stood out and said that they did not believe this association should take the stand they had taken in certain cases. This association, as I say, is a combination of about twenty-nine of the daily newspapers; the weekly newspapers are not in the combination, and they do not get the telegraphic news. This combination is and has been subsidized from year to year by the people of Canada to the extent of \$50,000 per year, and this has been done under several governments. I am not quite satisfied that if we are going to pass legislation in restraint of combinations, the people of Canada should continue to subsidize any organisation which absolutely takes it upon itself to keep a newspaper out of any particular city or town. I take this occasion to bring to the attention of the House this combination, because I think it is an outstanding combination in this country that needs investigation. I am quite aware, of course, when I make these remarks about this association, that there is no doubt at all of what they will think of me; but when a man is appointed by the people to represent them in parliament, when he sees something that he thinks should be remedied, he should have no hesitation whatever in getting upon his feet and saying what he thinks about the matter.

I agree with the general principles of this bill. I believe manufacturers and business men are just as honest as any other class of citizens in this country. I suppose there are amongst manufacturers and business men the same proportion of crooks—perhaps no more and no less—as there are amongst professional men, newspaper men and farmers. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to have legislation to catch crooks wherever they are, and to punish crooks when they are caught.

If in the opinion of this government, it is necessary to have legislation in this form, I am willing to subscribe to it and to vote in favour of it. But I hope the Prime Minister may see his way clear, so that business concerns such as the one I have described, comprising those who are trying to specialize on certain articles, to increase production and to lower prices to the consumers, may, if possible, be left out of the investigations that may be necessary under this legislation. Unless investigation is absolutely necessary for the general welfare of this country, these concerns should not be bothered by any such inquiries as are provided for in this measure.

As regards the penalty clause, a corporation is only fined, and there is no opportunity of imprisoning the master mind of such an organization. If they are powerful and wealthy enough, a fine of \$25,000 is

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not sufficient punishment, and in each of these organizations some officer should be made responsible who will take the gaol sentence, in case they are found guilty, just the same as any other porch-climber or burglar would go to gaol in case of an ordinary theft. This bill does not provide for any such punishment; it provides simply for a fine in the case of a corporation, and we all know how simple it is for a person to change into a corporation. That change can be effected under both provincial and federal law in a very simple manner, and then of course there is no one left to take the gaol sentence, and a little fine will settle all the trouble. I say "a little fine," because it is considered little to the interests concerned.

The point I want to make is this: If the law is necessary it should be made drastic enough to really punish the guilty; if it is not necessary it should not be placed upon the statute books. I agree that some such law is necessary, but I do not think it should be just in the form of this bill. I believe that the form of the bill can be changed in such a manner that legitimate business will not be worried, while combinations detrimental to the public interest will be punished. Another danger that may arise under this bill, as I said before, is the multiplication of officials. If it were possible to confine the administration of this proposed law to our courts, many of the objections as I see them would disappear.

In conclusion of these brief remarks, Sir, I wish to say that I do not think it is wrong for a man to attempt to criticize the form of proposed legislation the principle of which he is willing to support. When I entered public life one of the determining factors for my action was my absolute confidence in the Prime Minister and his cabinet and since I have been a member of this House I have seen and heard nothing to lead me to abate my confidence in the slightest degree. I still have the most absolute confidence that the Prime Minister is trying to do the very best he can for the people of this country, I also fully believe that the members of his cabinet are actuated by the same motives, and while I object to the form of this measure, if after due consideration by the Prime Minister and his cabinet they cannot see their way clear to amend its form, then, although I shall regret their inability to do so, I shall still subscribe to the general principle embodied in the bill and give it my support.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN  
(Leader of the Opposition): I desire to offer