

Combines Investigation Act

commissioner having to do with the flour milling industry and if so whether it would be tabled, and the hon. member for Vancouver East wanted to know whether there was any truth in the rumour that Mr. McGregor had resigned.

Please note that there were some other things that this house knew before yesterday which are part of this whole circumstance. We know by reference to sessional paper 53-F, tabled by the Secretary of State (Mr. Bradley) in response to a motion of mine, that there was on September 13 an interview between the Minister of Justice and a delegation from the Canadian Manufacturers Association having to do with the administration of and proposed amendments to the Combines Investigation Act. According to this sessional paper it would appear that discussion of the whole question of amendments to the Combines Investigation Act, some of which are before us and some of which are not before us, would be in order in this debate. I will not take the time to go through it except to say that on the basis of that sessional paper—and, by the way, the Secretary of State has admitted to me it is not complete and that there are supplementary returns to come down later—it is evident that the question of amending the Combines Investigation Act and the question of its administration and proper enforcement have been under consideration by the Minister of Justice for a long time. He has lived with this matter night and day since last January.

Without going into the details of the sessional paper at this moment, I come to the last point, namely, that on September 13 there was this interview between a delegation representing the Canadian Manufacturers Association and the Minister of Justice. The burden of the interview is set out in a memorandum contained in this document, and it indicates that that organization wanted certain amendments to the Combines Investigation Act. It is also clear that they have been wanting them for a long time, and that they wanted them in the session of parliament of last January, February, March and April. But none of these considerations, none of these representations, and nothing arising out of the extended consideration that the minister gave to the problem prompted him at any time prior to November 2 to give notice of a motion for leave to introduce a bill to amend the Combines Investigation Act.

On September 21, as is now publicly known, my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis), proposed to ask certain questions of the Minister of Justice. I need not go over what happened on that occasion, but it seems to me there is another point that should have led the minister to take

action on this most important matter. On October 22 there was the three-hour discussion in the minister's office in which four people were involved, the minister and three others whose names are well known. Even that did not provoke the minister to the point of introducing the bill now before us. On October 29 Mr. McGregor sent his resignation to the Minister of Justice, but even that did not do the trick. On Wednesday afternoon, November 2, the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart (Mr. Coldwell) and then the hon. member for Vancouver East asked questions which were embarrassing, and lo and behold, when we get our copies of *Votes and Proceedings* for November 2, which reached our desks the next morning, we discover that action is at last the order of the day.

Mr. Garson: Will my hon. friend permit a question?

Mr. Knowles: Gladly.

Mr. Garson: He is not trying to take the credit for these amendments for his party, is he?

Mr. Coldwell: Yes, I can—December 4, 1947, in my letter to the prime minister.

Mr. Garson: This is the second instalment now.

Mr. MacInnis: There is one thing that is certain. There is not much credit coming to the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has the floor.

Mr. Knowles: Thank you, although I am also grateful for the help.

The point I am making in answer to the Minister of Justice is that the credit for provoking the minister to give notice of this bill goes entirely to what happened on the floor of the house. None of these other things did it, and I have not told the house the story I could tell if I went through sessional paper No. 53-F. Then when it becomes evident, because the minister is not able to answer the question on November 2, that there is something strange going on, notice is filed that afternoon that Bill 144 is to be introduced. The next day, Thursday, November 3, as is recorded in *Hansard*, we got the answers to the questions asked the day before. The answer to one question is a simple yes, that there is a report from the commissioner on the flour milling industry and that it will be tabled. The answer to the other question is likewise a simple yes, namely, that the commissioner had tendered his resignation. In the same exchange that took place on Thursday, November 3, I asked the minister if, when he tabled the report, it would be within fifteen days of the date he received it.

[Mr. Knowles.]