

lation which in its unbiassed judgment would be really hurtful to the public interests. We know that measures can be carried in the popular branch of the Legislature, where the person introducing them has a large number associated with him, sympathising with him and willing to help him, that are not to the advantage of the country. On several occasions such Bills have come to this House and we have thrown them out or amended them because, in our judgment, they were not in the interests of the country, although they had been carried in the other House by the representatives of the people.

HON. MR. DRUMMOND—I did not propose to say anything on this question and did not come prepared to discuss the general question, because, as has been so well pointed out by the hon. gentleman from Sarnia, the question of combines is not under discussion at all; it is really and truly a question of eliminating two words from the Act which we passed last year for the purpose of regulating and keeping under all combines, whatever they may be. Under these circumstances, perhaps, I would be entitled to say nothing whatever on the general question; but as it has been in spite of all this obvious irregularity, discussed by hon. gentlemen, both in committee and in the House, and as my name has been brought into prominence in connection with it, I will, with your permission, myself trespass a little beyond the legitimate ground to meet one or two points raised by the speakers who oppose the report of the committee. Every man in business must know that to discuss his own affairs in public is to the last degree disagreeable, to say the least of it; but I have been pointedly referred to, and not only referred to with reference to various combinations, but have been, by the hon. member from Monck, pointedly addressed when he spoke of the impropriety of hon. Senators, who are interested, having any vote on this question. I shall set all this at rest by informing this House that I am not, so far as I know, in any combination whatever having any purpose of advancing prices, and that the only indirect connection I have with such combinations is the connection with the Grocers' Guild, in the sale of the article which is produced by the company of which I am president; and

indirectly only to this extent, because neither I nor the company which I represent, have any pecuniary interest in the matter whatever, no pecuniary interest in the raising of the price of any article, so far as I know.

There is not amongst the refiners now, and there never has been, any combination whatever for the purpose of putting up prices. In fact, the refiners occupy the same relation to each other as the celebrated Kilkenny cats—we fight to the last for every bit of the business going—every wholesale dealer in the country knows perfectly well that that is the case. It would not matter one sixpence to me directly if the combination amongst the grocers were suppressed to-morrow. Indirectly I say it might, and I will give you the reasons for that: For the very reasons that induced the refiners individually to go into any association with the grocers' guild, for they are not in combination with them—was to protect the general interest of the trade, and not to the disadvantage of the country. We are interested in the solvency of our customers. That is an obvious duty which equally impresses every man in the business, be he merchant, manufacturer, or in any other capacity. Long before the National Policy was even dreamed of in this country, and since, it is a rule amongst merchants to regard with a keen scrutiny the solvency of those who purchase their goods and owe them money. The hon. gentleman from Quinté may laugh, but if he enquires he will find that that is the obvious duty of every merchant; and when the wholesale grocers came to us and declared, and produced proofs, that they were conducting the sugar portion of their business, not only without profit, but at an actual loss, what was our obvious duty, but to give earnest heed to the representations which they made to us. If that be not a rule of commercial operations, commercial in every sense of the word, I do not know one that exists. I know many merchants, not manufacturers, but merchants, who, if they detected a customer selling goods below cost, or even at cost, would not hesitate to strike him off their books and refuse to sell him any more, under the grave doubt that he would long continue to pay his debts. If the Grocers' Guild came to me and made the representation I state to you