
Commissions of inquiry: safeguards for protection of citizens

Citizens involved in commissions of inquiry, whether they appear or not before them, will be better protected from adverse effects on their rights, reputation and privacy, if a proposal made by the Law Reform Commission of Canada becomes law.

In a working paper released recently, titled *Commissions of Inquiry: A New Act*, the law reformers propose that the old act, passed in 1868 and modified only a few times since, be repealed and replaced by a new act which would provide safeguards for the protection of individuals and the public and give commissions powers more closely suited to their individual needs.

The Commission's proposed new act gives the federal Cabinet the authority to establish 'advisory commissions', to advise the Government on broad policy issues, and 'investigatory commissions' to look into the facts of specific problems. The Law Reform Commission says that one advantage of having a statute that offers a choice between commissions to advise and commissions to investigate is that it will be unnecessary to grant every commission strong powers whether it needs them or not.

Advisory bodies

Advisory commissions, under the paper's scheme, would generally have no power to enforce the attendance of witnesses, to compel evidence under oath, or force production of documents or other evidence. The Commission believes that to compel citizens to give advice or opinion is inappropriate in a democracy. For the rare occasions where this may be required, the act provides that the Cabinet may exceptionally grant such powers. The main feature of advisory commissions in the new scheme — apart from the absence of strong powers — is the provision for the hearing and funding, at the Commission's discretion, of individuals or groups who have a real interest in the commission's inquiry.

Investigatory bodies

Investigatory commissions would have broader powers. These commissions would be permitted to compel the attendance of witnesses, enforce the

production of documents, compel witnesses to give evidence, ensure adherence to rules of practice and procedure that may be established, and maintain order firmly. These strengthen some of the powers under the existing act.

In addition, under the proposed new act, search warrants may be issued to obtain relevant evidence and imprisonment may be imposed for failure of a witness to give evidence. But enforcement of these powers would be done through the laying of an information before the ordinary courts. The idea that commissions of inquiry should have direct powers of enforcement, as is the case in some provinces, is firmly rejected by the law reform body. The working paper states that only the courts should have such powers in the absence of exceptional circumstances. Federal inquiry commissions have not in the past had or required such powers. If, at any time, it is felt that a commission should have more extensive powers, the Commission says it should be done by a special act of Parliament.

After allowing for comments to be expressed and discussed, the Law Reform Commission will make its final views known in a report to Parliament in a few months.

The hotter the better

For Canada's overseas mustard trade, the hotter the mustard the better.

Keith Downey and Don Woods, two mustard specialists on the staff of the Agriculture Canada research station in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, recently finished work on a new variety of oriental mustard seed. The new seed, called *Domo* — Japanese for "Thank you" — is now licensed and will be grown this summer under contract by Western farmers.

"One of the things *Domo* really has going for it is its hotness," Dr. Downey says. "It's a much desired feature in our trade. It's also at least 10 percent higher-yielding than the variety now grown (Lethbridge 22A), is more resistant to 'lodging' and has good seed shape and colour.

"All these features are sought by both the producer and the trade. We've built them into *Domo* so that Canadian mustard can maintain its dominant place in the world market. We are the major mustard supplier to the world."

Of the 200,000 acres of mustard grown annually in Canada, about half produce the "hot-dog" mustard seed sold here and in the United States. Twenty-five per cent of the acreage is seeded to the brown mustards popular for export to Europe.

The remaining 25 per cent is seeded to oriental mustard destined mainly for the Japanese market.

Niagara Falls sightseeing aerial cars

Plans for a \$6-million tramway across the Niagara River — offering a panorama of the United States and Canadian Falls — are being considered by both the Ontario and New York State city authorities concerned. According to the developers, two enclosed cars, each with a capacity of 140 passengers, would travel across the river suspended on 3,600-foot cables linking the two countries.

The cables, supported by a single pylon on each side of the river, would be almost parallel to the Rainbow Bridge, just north of the Falls. The promoting companies estimate the tramway would take about five minutes for the crossing and on busy days nearly 25,000 persons could be carried.

Before the tramway can be put into operation it must be approved by the two cities, the parks commissions on both sides of the river, the province of Ontario and New York State and federal authorities.

Subsidy payment for dairy farmers

Final subsidy payments for the 1976-1977 dairy year, totalling \$24 million, were mailed out to dairy farmers recently by the Canadian Dairy Commission. The payments included March subsidy payments plus the year-end adjustment of \$6 million.

Cheques were sent to 60,000 milk and cream shippers. Milk shippers received cheques up to \$3,500 for an average of \$55. Cheques to cream shippers were up to \$1,000 with an average of \$116.