

*Combines—Mr. Woodsworth*

layer in the great tenement houses of our crowded districts, and not only are they piled layer upon layer, but they are associated room by room, so that there is in every room, sometimes, in our congested districts, a separate family. In some foreign countries they have made much more progress than we in handling these things. In the city of Glasgow, for example (Glasgow is one of the model cities of the world), they have made up their minds that the entries and the hallways of great tenements are public streets. Therefore, the policeman goes up the stairway, and patrols the corridors; the lighting department of the city sees to it that the halls are abundantly lighted. The city does not deceive itself into supposing that that great building is a unit from which the police are to keep out and the civic authority to be excluded, but it says: "These are public highways, and light is needed in them, and control by the authority of the city."

I liken that to our great modern industrial enterprises. A corporation is very like a large tenement house; it isn't the premises of a single commercial family; it is just as much a public affair as a tenement house is a network of public highways.

When you offer the securities of a great corporation to anybody who wishes to purchase them, you must open that corporation to the inspection of everybody who wants to purchase. There must, to follow out the figure of the tenement house, be lights along the corridors, there must be police patrolling the openings, there must be inspection wherever it is known that men may be deceived with regard to the contents of the premises. If we believe that fraud lies in wait for us, we must have the means of determining whether our suspicions are well founded or not.

I do not think there is anywhere a better statement of the character of modern industry and the necessity of having these big corporations wide open to public inspection. I do not see why we should talk any longer about business secrets; developments have carried us beyond that stage. The member for Vancouver Centre (Mr. Stevens) in criticizing the bill said that combination ought to be considered a crime only when there is a combination to deliberately injure competitors. It strikes me, although I am not a lawyer, that that is rather a novel position. It would seem that in many departments of law injury does not have to be deliberate in order that it should be made a crime. Why, we have even such a phrase as "criminal neglect" to condemn people who under certain circumstances do not do anything at all; but it is recognized that they should do something. Now, if we have a combination that has the effect of injuring the community surely that is a good reason why that particular combination should be made a criminal one. I do not know a better statement of the case than was given by the Prime Minister himself when he said that private rights cease when they involve public wrongs. So then in each case we come back to the question as to whether any particular form or association is in the interests of the public or is contrary to their interests. We find that through the course of years,

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with no particular guilt on the part of any one, we have arrived at these great industrial, commercial, financial institutions which we call combines, mergers and trusts. I take it that we are not here to-night blaming the individuals who, perhaps, have had a larger share of initiative and have organized these big combinations. We are not saying that the combines should not have been organized. They probably represent a distinct step in advance of the old unorganized stage of society, the old free competition that used to exist fifty or a hundred years ago, but on the other hand no one can consider their social effects without realizing that they have placed in the hands of a very small group of individuals an immense power, not only in this country, but in all countries. There is to-day a life and death struggle as to whether the industrial, commercial and financial organizations that have grown up in the last hundred years will be supreme and control even our political organizations, or whether the political organizations which grew up under an earlier system of production, are going to adapt themselves with sufficient rapidity, and are capable of asserting their control over the newer industrial organizations which now rival them in power. I take it that to-night we are helping to decide that struggle. If this House is true to the people that it represents, it will definitely set itself to attack our great problems. I welcome this bill because it gives a certain measure of publicity, because it calls public attention to the evils which exist and to the necessity for further action. I cannot become tremendously enthusiastic about it, because it is negative in its character, it simply seeks to stem the inevitable incoming tide of greater combinations. I could hope that in some way we could recognize the good that lies in combinations, in the formation of larger industrial and social units, and that as a House we could begin in a democratic way, to operate these larger units.

Mr. ALBERT FREDERICK HEALY (North Essex): The constituency I represent, containing as it does somewhere in the neighbourhood of a hundred thousand people, has within its borders special manufacturers who, through the course of building up their business have fixed prices and claim that, in order to carry on their business in the way they have built it up, they must continue to fix prices. This bill, as I read it, does not say that the manufacturers must not fix a retail price, but it does say, in the words of the Prime Minister, that when they do fix that retail price, it must not be to the detriment of the general public. Now what is the present law on the