

The Address—Mr. G. S. White

request the solicitor for the board to supply me with copies of the invoices; but the solicitor, who soon acquired all the arrogance this board has always possessed, said he was not obliged to furnish me with anything. Thereupon I wrote to the board at Ottawa, explaining the action of their solicitor, and the board replied advising me that they had instructed their solicitor to furnish me with the required copies.

It was also interesting to note that before the case came to court the solicitor for the board called on the grocer with a prepared paper which he asked him to sign, in which he would be pleading guilty. It has always seemed to me, Mr. Speaker, that any Canadian citizen must be presumed innocent until he is found guilty in a proper court of law, and that every citizen is entitled to his day in court. When the case came before the magistrate the investigator, with the assistance of his solicitor, attempted to file the statement he had obtained from the grocer. I objected to its admission, pointing out the well-known rules of evidence concerning the admission of any statement signed by an accused. The magistrate refused to admit the statement; and I was amazed to hear the investigator for the board say under oath that it was the practice of the board to obtain these statements while conducting their investigations and file them later during court proceedings.

It was also interesting to hear the investigator admit under oath that in the great majority of the stores he investigated he found some slight infractions of the regulations. He admitted that in my village he found such slight infractions in a number of stores, but that in very few cases prosecutions followed. As a lawyer I cannot follow the reasoning which dictates that in one village where there are ten merchants, all guilty of some slight infractions of the regulations, only one should be prosecuted, or persecuted, as you wish. Tactics such as these do not encourage respect for this law or these regulations, nor do they inspire any confidence in the manner this board enforces these price ceiling regulations.

As the final act in this peculiar case I was advised, on authority I would not question in the slightest degree, that two days after the case was heard the solicitor for the prosecution received instructions from the board at Ottawa to press for a fine of at least \$100. These instructions had not been issued before the date the case was originally slated to be heard, and I can only assume that the board, with its usual autocratic methods, felt that any backbencher member of parliament who

dared question or protest against any act of the board should be punished, and the only way he could be punished was to penalize his client. Fortunately, however, the case had been disposed of already, and the magistrate in his wisdom found the charges so trifling that the fine was merely nominal.

It does seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that there were many unusual features to this case, which however I presume must be the usual procedure. First we had the investigator taking away the invoices so that any solicitor who might be acting for the accused could not prepare his defence. Then he obtained a statement, contrary to all the recognized rules of practice. Then the solicitor for the board refused to furnish copies of the invoices. Then there was the action of that same solicitor in attempting to have the accused plead guilty. Finally there was the action of the board, after discovering that an opposition member of parliament was acting as solicitor for the grocer, in issuing instructions to insist upon a heavy fine. I notice that a committee has been set up to revise the criminal code, and as a sideline it might well devote its energies to improving and bringing up to date the procedure followed by the wartime prices and trade board in filing and carrying out prosecutions.

I would suggest to the minister that in all future prosecutions by this board, especially in my own village—which no doubt now will be persecuted more than ever—the well established and defined legal procedure be followed. It is very difficult for me to approve the attitude of this board in deciding who, among a large number of merchants all of whom may be guilty of some slight infractions, should be the victim, who should be persecuted. I would not even suggest that some slight political bias might enter into such a decision; yet I find that in my district, at least, those who have been prosecuted by this board are individuals who are and always have been opposed to this government.

I should like to concur in the remarks made by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Green) about veterans affairs. I regret that the minister has decided not to set up the veterans affairs committee at this session, because I am sure he has received many complaints regarding veterans allowances, including a brief from the legion. These allowances at the present time are inadequate and I for one hope that the minister will reconsider his decision and yet decide to set up the veterans affairs committee during this session, if only to deal with allowances under the War Veterans Allowance Act.