

*Importation of Fuel*

bines Investigation Act long and carefully and decided that it would be most effective if a trusted servant of the government should be afforded the opportunity of investigating privately and deciding whether or not a public investigation, if that is what you wish to call a trial, should take place. And it is specifically enacted that this investigation shall be private. I hope I have made it clear to the hon. member who represents St. Mary (Mr. Deslauriers) why in the one instance the investigation was public and why in its incipient stages the other it was not. When the registrar made his report his findings were forwarded to those officers who, under our constitution, are charged with the administration of the laws of which it was said a breach had been committed and they, however reluctantly, in the fulfilment of their duty put those laws in motion.

I think it well that there should not be confusion on these issues. In these days, when there is some suffering and when there are many people out of work who are easily incited to rebel against their lot, it seems to me unfortunate that the agencies charged with the preservation of law and order should be without reason accused of partiality in the administration of their offices.

My friend from St. Mary raises another broad question which I think will bear some scrutiny. My hon. friends from St. Mary and St. Denis say these are trusts, that these are combinations. I would point out that all trusts and all combinations are not in themselves illicit, and are not in themselves baneful; it is only those which operate in restraint of trade that are harmful. This is so true that in a neighbouring country, one of the great countries of the world, they have abolished their anti-trust legislation; they have torn up their Sherman statute and today have consolidated, amalgamated and combined, if you like, for the purpose of doing away with the cost and loss incidental to competition. I am not arguing for trusts or combines; I am keeping carefully away from the question which is before the courts, but I think it well that my hon. friends from St. Denis and St. Mary should realize that they must go a step further than merely establishing that there is a combination or trust, before they can complain of the activities of such an organization. Would it surprise my hon. friends if I told them that the whole world is cartelized, that in a number of industries the world is divided, A taking this continent and B taking that continent? Are we to conclude that ill necessarily results from organization and discipline? I am not

[Mr. Hackett.]

urging that greed may not characterize these activities at times, but when that has been established it is time to complain. The charge is inadequate, however, if it merely states that competition has been eliminated. We in this chamber spent weeks and even months in dealing with our railways, and what was the source of the trouble? It was the cost of competition, the unnecessary expenditure which resulted from the efforts of these contending companies to wrest business from one another, and if I understood the purpose of the legislation which was enacted last session, its chief object was to do away with the cost that is incidental to rivalry.

My hon. friend from St. Mary has gone very far indeed; he has suggested that it is the function of this government to appoint a commission to control the importation of fuels into Canada. He has not told the house exactly how far he wishes to go with his control. Does he wish to have all traffic in fuels become an exclusive prerogative of the crown? Does he wish that we should be forced to go to the commission and buy our coal at such reduced prices as we buy our beverages from the liquor commission? Does he wish that the government should have a monopoly of wood, coal, crude oil and electricity, of course, we must remember that a great many people are using electricity these days for purposes of heating—would he include all these in the activities of a vast commission or combine controlling one of the essentials of life in this northern climate? I think he has much to explain. Before he can hope that this chamber will consider his suggestion seriously he must carry his definition much farther. Before he has gone very far he would find some difficulty—and may I add that the government of my native province is as alert as any other in the vindication of its rights. If the federal government attempted to establish a monopoly in the province of Quebec on a necessity of life such as fuel, it would not be long before the provincial government would make it clear that the field was not unchallenged. I wonder whether or not my hon. friends from St. Mary and St. Denis have had the advantage of a long discussion with the ex-minister of Justice, the hon. member for Quebec East (Mr. Lapointe) as to the constitutionality of their suggestion? I should be greatly interested and none the less edified by his opinions as to the feasibility and the legal possibility of the suggestion embodied in this resolution.

Of course, to be effective a commission would have to control not only the importation but also the price of fuel; it would have to control the wages paid to those handling