

that but, as I said the other day, if parliament is to be handcuffed by the British North America Act in heaven's name let us at least attempt to unravel that problem. But we have not done much in regard to it. We have been drugged into quiescence by a few ill-considered bills that were damned when they were introduced by those who introduced them.

Mr. Speaker, I speak with a good deal of regret, but I feel that we have failed to hear the rumblings in the country, the rumblings of discontent, the demands for action, the claims from the farmers, the workers, the business men, industrialists, manufacturers and professional men, all of whom are looking to parliament to find some way out of this difficulty with which we find ourselves confronted. I still believe it is possible for parliament—too late now, perhaps—but I still believe it was possible for parliament to bring some measure of justice, some measure of equity, some laws which would enable men to live one with the other in honest competition, rather than to be subjected to the domineering control of certain industries. I believe, sir, that the ideal of the Canadian people is justice, equity and fair dealing, and I believe the Canadian people will demand of hon. members, as we leave this parliament and face the country, that we answer them as to why it was in this closing session of parliament we have not done more than has been done in these three or four bills which, in my opinion, are wholly inadequate to deal with the difficulties with which we have been confronted.

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, in 1867 the provinces were united together under a statute known as the British North America Act. This statute constitutes the constitution of the Dominion of Canada. It contemplated a federal, not a legislative union. Under the provisions of that statute, whether we like it or not, we are bound until such time as the statute has been changed, by proper authority.

On May 30, 1919, this House of Commons set up a committee constituting of Messrs. Nicholson (Algoma), Stevens—the hon. member who has just taken his seat—Reid (MacKenzie), Douglas (Strathcona), Davis, Hocken, Sutherland, Fielding, Davidson, Nesbit, McCoig, Sinclair (Queens, P.E.I.), Devlin, Vien and Euler—

for the purpose of inquiring forthwith as to the prices charged throughout Canada for foodstuffs, clothing, fuel and other necessities of life, and as to the rates of profit made thereon by dealers and others concerned in

their production, distribution and sale; also as to rentals of dwelling houses in industrial centres of Canada and rates of return of capital invested therein, with power—

And so on.

That committee held many meetings, and made two reports an interim and a final report. I shall refer to the interim report. The committee was presided over by the late George B. Nicholson, and I believe the hon. member who has just taken his seat was at times vice-chairman. The interim report reads in part as follows:

Tuesday, June 26, 1919. The special committee appointed for the purpose of inquiring forthwith as to the prices charged throughout Canada for foodstuffs, clothing, fuel and other necessities of life, and as to the rates of profit made thereon by dealers and others concerned in their production, distribution and sale, also as to the rentals of dwelling houses in industrial centres of Canada and rates of return of capital invested therein, presented the second report of the said committee.

Then they report that they have examined numbers of witnesses.

There has come to the attention of your committee evidence in regard to undue profits being made on certain commodities. Your committee in order to provide a means by which a recurrence of such may be prevented and that the public may be protected against unfair practices in trade recommend to the consideration of the house and the government that legislation be enacted at this session of parliament creating a tribunal with power to investigate mergers, trusts, monopolies or organizations of any kind or nature, which tend to limit facilities for transporting, producing, manufacturing, supplying, storing, or preventing, limiting or lessening manufacture or production, or fixing a common price, or a resale price, or a common rental, or a common cost of storage, or transportation, or enhancing the price, rental or cost of article, rental, storage or transportation or preventing or lessening competition in or substantially controlling within any particular district, or generally, production, manufacture, purchase, barter, sale, transportation, insurance, or supply, or otherwise restraining or injuring commerce, or unduly enhancing the price of the necessities of life, also with regulative power in connection with discriminations in price between different purchasers of commodities, exclusive purchase and sale arrangements, inter-corporate shareholding and interlocking directorates and unfair methods in commerce.

That report is signed by the chairman.

The third report was dated July 5, 1919, and is a comprehensive survey and review of conditions as they had existed in Canada. Those conclusions being somewhat long I shall not take the time this afternoon—indeed I am not able to—to read them at length, beyond saying that the remedy is to be found at page 12 of the report. I shall direct the attention of the house seriously to these remedies or recommendations: