

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: There is something you overlook entirely, and you must overlook it, I think, because you are new upon the scene.

Hon. Mr. LYNCH-STAUNTON: You don't know the tricks of the trade.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: The investigation itself is one of the severest punishments that can be visited on business. Do you think I don't know? The investigation itself, I tell you, is one of the severest penalties that can be visited on business. The most upright organization in the world is subject to blackmail, no matter how it may come out when it gets to court.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: By blackmail you mean injury?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Blackmail comes before injury. It is subject to injury.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I confess it has never entered my mind in the last twenty-five years that the Act could be used for such a purpose.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I am not saying there is an instance, but I am not sure there has not been. I know it is as easily done as anything in the world can be done. I certainly can say it has been threatened to be done. Whether it ever was done I am not saying.

Hon. Mr. ROGERS: Could it not be done by royal commission under the Inquiries Act at any time?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Yes. That is a pretty mighty instrument. But the royal commissioner is usually a judge. He may be a good or a bad one, he may have forgotten his past or he may not, but there is at least that protection. Here there is nothing at all, if you have your way. It is just the Minister and his officials, and they are in a position to visit severe punishment on any industry. I do not think they should be allowed to do it unless they are able to convince a judge they have reasonable cause. At the preliminary inquiry there might be a stage defined, before the investigation goes to the length of certain sections, those that call for examination under oath, for all these returns and the like; there should be a stage defined when that authority should be given. All you have to show is that there is reasonable ground to proceed. Having shown that you get your authority. What is the difficulty?

Mr. MCGREGOR: There is just one point. In the twelve years' experience I have had in this work there has been no political pressure brought to bear upon me to make any kind of inquiry.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: How do you know what your Minister had in mind? If I were the Minister you would never know.

Mr. MCGREGOR: I can say the same on the other side, as far as any influence being brought to bear by industrial corporations is concerned.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: They would not exert any improper influence. But what is your difficulty? Here is your evidence. What is to hinder you going only a few hundred yards to convince someone that you are acting in good faith?

Hon. Mr. ROGERS: The commissioner is appointed by Governor in Council, and any government having a sense of responsibility would seek to have a man of responsibility. There is nothing to prevent a lawyer or a judge being a commissioner. On the other hand, there is nothing I can see in the Act that would prevent the commissioner from carrying out his duties in precisely the same way that one with judicial or legal experience would do.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Why have judges at all? Why put them in the position they are in if you can always depend on a government official? Why, it is the very essence of British institutions. If you are looking for election, and this man is under you, and you say there is no reason for having a judge as the official, we do not need a judge at all.