

*Combines Investigation Act*

We all agree with that. The only difference of opinion would be: When is a witch hunt not a witch hunt? Then I go on:

It was, rather, an investigation of the economic situation which brought about the suggested complaints about prices, and I submit now—

And this is the important part of it.

—as I did in the beginning here, that it is a mistake to set down a deadline or attempt to set down a deadline in connection with this inquiry. I do not suggest that this committee should undertake as wide and as detailed an inquiry as the Curtis commission did, but I do submit that the MacQuarrie report does not begin to approach, and I do not think their investigation has begun to approach, from the public point of view, and from the point of view of a democratic interest in this whole subject, the work that was done by the Curtis commission. The MacQuarrie report is a very well stated summary; someone has compared it to an obiter dictum of the supreme court on arguments, and I think that is what it is. There is not a word of evidence given in it.

And may I say that I think the authors of the MacQuarrie report were, perhaps by accident, put in a very unfortunate position. It seems now that the short time they were given in which to make this sort of preliminary or partial report put them in a position which perhaps it might have been wiser to have avoided. Perhaps they tried to avoid it, for all I know. I continue.

There is not a word of evidence given in it. There is a summary of arguments, pro and con, on this subject, but, to my way of thinking, it is something that invites me, as a member of parliament—

I was interested in reading that phrase because I suppose in my ignorance I had forgotten that it fits a senator. I continue:

—it is something that invites me, as a member of parliament, to reflect back to the people of this country public opinion, to which I am responsible, some degree of evidence to support the conclusions of the MacQuarrie report. That is the only point I should like to bring out.

I should like now to refer to another quarter, certainly one not associated with our party, and to quote the remarks of the hon. member for St. James (Mr. Beaudry) as reported on page 249. We were delighted to hear the hon. member speak the other night. He has explained twice on questions of privilege that in spite of the views he holds, which are diametrically opposed to those of his party, apparently he is going to go along with them. He reminded me of a statement I saw in some work on the British parliament which referred to people who made speeches to satisfy their consciences and then voted to satisfy the whips. I think that is what the hon. member for St. James has done. The hon. member stated in the committee:

I am quite in sympathy with Senator Lambert's remarks and in order to expedite matters, since we have very little in the way of concrete evidence so far before us—

That is really an echo of what Senator Lambert said.

—and since it is a laborious task to elicit it from witnesses, I would like to know whether we could not get from official sources a definite set of figures that we would otherwise have to draw from every witness. If I may I would like to suggest some that could incorporate in the record, to which we could refer without asking witnesses for it. We should obtain information, for instance, as to the number of independent stores and independent businesses by provinces and by classification, let us say, in 1930, 1935, 1940 and 1950, and information as to the aggregate volume of business per classification. We could have the same information filed for chain and departmental stores, the volume of mail order business done in Canada in these different years, the number of bankruptcies since 1930, again by classification.

I shall not read the rest of that paragraph as I do not want to weary the house. I point out that here are two men who do not belong to this party making the same complaint we have made, that we are being asked to act on opinion. This committee was not allowed to have original facts but was asked to act on opinion. I consider that an unfortunate and indeed improper way to carry on the work of the committee. I think those in the committee and those in this house who criticized the manner in which that work was carried on were only too well justified in what they said.

Here again I should like to underline that this afternoon the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew), when speaking on this matter and asking for further consideration, was merely reaching the only conclusion that could be reached from the remarks I have read of the minister, of Senator Lambert and of the hon. member for St. James. So much for that.

I wish now to turn to another aspect of the proceedings which I think are most important and to me very interesting. I think if I had been asked before any evidence was given what I thought would be the attitude of labour I would have been inclined to guess that they would be for the legislation. In the questions that were asked representatives of labour they were given every chance to say the opposite of what they did say. They were very cautious in their view. They wanted to do exactly what we want to have done, have the facts. They refused to jump to conclusions. I now propose to read briefly from the evidence given by Mr. L. E. Wismer, director of public relations and research, Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, who appeared with Mr. Percy R. Bengough, the president of that organization. Mr. Wismer made an opening statement which I think was rather a model statement.