

The Address—Mr. Drew

Mr. Drew: We have had our objections, and very serious objections, to the administration of the Combines Investigation Act. In fact if some of the members on my left are curious let them examine *Hansard* and they will find that they felt that, almost to an unwelcome degree, we carried on criticism of the administration of that act in this very house within the past two years.

Mr. Coldwell: That is assuming something that is not quite correct.

Mr. Drew: No, it is not assuming something that is not correct. Both parties on my left criticized the administration of the act, but the record is clear that the main criticism of its administration came from this party which has supported the principles inherent in the Combines Investigation Act at all times. We want laws that will prevent abuses, but in seeking a cure for the abuses we do not want to go back to a point where once again those who happen to have the power of government are going to be empowered to tell other people what they shall do and to deny to individuals or groups of individuals the right of free competition.

My friends opposite have perhaps not welcomed the suggestion that they are socialists in silk hats. They are welcome to any other name that they choose, but the objection that I have expressed, and which has been expressed by others, is that they have consciously or unconsciously carried forward this very belief in state control and as recently as the past few weeks have enunciated policies which seem to be strangely inconsistent with the ideas of freedom that they have supported so strongly by their spoken declarations over the years.

I would refer to the statement by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) at page 48 of *Hansard* for November 16, 1953, when he dealt with my remarks about the stated policy of the government, that they were going to decide what is good for industry where that falls within their power, and that they were going to substitute their supreme judgment for that of individuals or groups of individuals who are prepared to take risks and enter certain fields of activity. These were his words:

We do believe in competition when competition is apt to provide what it normally does provide, the right kind of stimulation and better service; but we did not believe that under existing conditions that would have been apt to happen in the operation of this as a public utility service.

I grant you, Mr. Speaker, that this statement is a long way from some of the statements which have been made, particularly by the newer members of the socialist party in this house during the present debate; nevertheless it is an assertion of the principle that the government will decide when it is wise

for individuals or groups of individuals organized collectively under our statutory provisions to engage in this or that venture, when it is wise for them to take risks, and whether they should really be allowed to risk their money with the chance of making a return.

That is the policy that is enunciated, that is the policy inherent in the decision made in the refusal of the application by the Canadian Pacific Air Lines for permission to operate a competitive air cargo service. I repeat what I said before. It is not this specific application that is at issue. It is the principle enunciated as the reason for dealing with it. It is a principle which is strangely similar to that which has been supported so vigorously and so strongly and in terms reminiscent of the Regina manifesto. It was over 100 years ago that that great writer, John Stuart Mill, had this to say:

If all citizens were appointed and paid by the government, and looked to the government for every rise in life, nothing could make such a country free otherwise than in name.

I concede immediately that the principle now enunciated is still a long way from denying those personal rights and freedoms that would carry us to the point pictured by John Stuart Mill, but the time to stop any move toward a state of that kind is when a policy is declared which could lead to that end.

Our amendment is directed particularly to this action of the government, and let there be no doubt about it the motion which we have put forward is a want of confidence motion. In stating that we ask for the support of the principle of free competition, we do so because we criticize the government for abandoning it, and we did hope that the government may have reconsidered, even while this debate was under way, a statement of policy so contrary to what they have alleged to be their policy in the past and so consistent with the over-all policy of the socialists to our left. Every dangerous movement, Mr. Speaker, has a beginning and it moves forward, and it is often by those who are most sincere and innocent of any wrong design that the most dangerous course can be initiated, because it is the man who is perfectly sure he is right, firmly convinced that he is right, who will stick to a course which may be completely wrong.

Now, at some time this course could lead to very dangerous results. We have pointed out how dangerous they could be if under the stress of any economic disturbance this government sought to apply these principles to a wider field, as it unquestionably could under the emergency powers it now possesses. In any trend of this kind there is some point of no return. Let us be sure we do not approach the point of no return. The