

Mr. MACDOUGALL: And we thank you for it.

Mr. GORDON: The amount of coal moved under the subventions from the province of Nova Scotia into central Canada now amounts to almost one and a half million tons. Assistance was also given to western Canada in connection with the movement of coal into the industrial areas of Quebec and Ontario. It is true that there is shown a great shrinkage the world over in the consumption of coal, but examination of the figures will show that the shrinkage in Canada is at least no worse than it is in other coal producing countries. There are some who say that this industry should not be subsidized, and arguments may be advanced in favour of that opinion. My own view is that the coal industry in Canada, built up as it was over a long period of years; towns, villages and communities having been established about the operating coal mines, and the industry being national in character, any government is justified in lending reasonable assistance to that industry in order that it may be kept going and that the wage earners engaged therein shall not be disturbed and probably have to seek employment elsewhere. I think that particularly at a time like this, no better form of relief could possibly be granted than the assistance that the government has given to the coal mining industry of this country.

Now, sir, I do not know that it would be helpful to say more at this time; perhaps an opportunity will arise later when the estimates are before the house to go more carefully into the matter of the production of coal, the assistance that has been given, and all the interrelated matters having to do with that most complex industry. At the moment I shall only say that we have our Combines Investigation Act, and as long as that act is on our statute book this house will expect me to do no more and no less than see that its provisions are observed. I shall most certainly see that that is done.

Mr. J. T. HACKETT (Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for St. Mary (Mr. Deslauriers) has brought in a resolution suggesting that it is in the public interest that the federal government should appoint a commission to control the importation of all fuels into Canada. That may be a topic for useful debate, but before my hon. friend reached the point of his resolution he devoted some time to criticism of the government under several headings. The first point, and the one that seemed to arouse the greatest resent-

ment in his bosom, was that the government had not held an even and fair scale in the conduct of its business. He asked, Why should there have been a public inquiry in the Beauharnois matter and a private inquiry in the coal matter? I think that to ask the question is probably to answer it. The records of the house for the year 1931 show that on the 10th of June, 1931, by unanimous consent it was ordered:

That Messrs. Dorion, Fiset, Gardiner, Gordon, Jacobs, Jones, Lennox, Mackenzie (Vancouver Centre), Stewart (Lethbridge), be a committee to investigate from its inception the Beauharnois project for the development of hydro-electric energy by the use of the waters of the St. Lawrence river so far as the matters referred to are within the jurisdiction of the parliament of Canada, and without restricting the generality of the foregoing words in particular to investigate the matters referred to in the speech made in the House of Commons by Mr. Robert Gardiner, the hon. member for Acadia, on the 19th day of May last, as reported on pages 1731-1740 of Hansard, and to report from time to time their observations and opinions thereon; with power to send for persons, papers and records.

Mr. Speaker, there is the charter, given unanimously by this chamber to nine gentlemen. It is beside my point to enter into the hinterland of the Beauharnois investigation or to follow it to any of its conclusions, sinister or otherwise, but I would draw to the attention of my hon. friend this fact, that the reason that investigation was parliamentary, public and all-embracing was that this house in its wisdom decreed that it should be just so.

Mr. HANSON (York): Unanimously.

Mr. HACKETT: Unanimously. If an investigation was conducted in another way, in another place, into another set of circumstances, it is simply because the statute under which that investigation was brought about required that it be carried out in the manner in which it was. Under paragraph 12 of the Combines Investigation Act the minister ordered the registrar to ascertain whether or not in his opinion sufficient grounds existed for a prosecution. Mark that well; under section 12, in the normal functioning of the statute, the minister instructed the registrar to ascertain whether or not in the registrar's opinion, after hearing all the witnesses, there was reason for a prosecution, which is a public investigation.

Does it not seem wise that anybody and everybody should not be subjected to the ignominy of a public investigation on mere suspicion or on what may be ill-founded information? This house debated the Com-