

carefully with any industrial legislation and make sure that he gets in advance an opinion of the law officers or of the supreme court or any other authority available as to the *intra vires* of any legislation he may attempt to introduce.

Now we come to another act, the Government Annuities Act, a further piece of social legislation. Who was responsible for that act? It was passed in 1908 under the Liberal government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and the minister who introduced it was Sir Richard Cartwright, Minister of Trade and Commerce at the time. The annuities branch was organized under the Department of Trade and Commerce but was later transferred to the Department of Labour.

The next measure mentioned is the Employment Offices Coordination Act. One might think we were getting somewhere near the point at which the Conservative party could claim something, but this act was passed in 1918. At that time we had no longer a Conservative administration but a union government composed of both Liberals and Conservatives, and this act I have no doubt owes its existence to the Liberals who were members of that government.

Then we come to the Technical Education Act, 1919. What was the genesis of that measure? The Technical Education Act embodied in legislation certain recommendations of a royal commission on technical education. Here again may I say, when the Prime Minister asks, "What has Mr. King done?" and hon. gentlemen say, "What has he done in these matters," that, in addition to having been deputy minister of Labour, I was for two or three years Minister of Labour in the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and when I was Minister of Labour I was responsible for some measures which I thought would be helpful in improving social and industrial conditions. One was the appointment of a royal commission on technical education. That commission made an extensive study of the question, made its recommendations, and it was on the basis of the recommendations of that commission that the Technical Education Act was subsequently enacted. The war intervened between the time the report was made and the time the legislation was enacted, but the legislation was enacted not by a Conservative government but by a union government in 1919 carrying out recommendations arising out of the report made by the Commission appointed by the previous Liberal administration.

The next measure mentioned is the Combines Investigation Act. That act has an interesting history. The Combines Investigation Act was first introduced in this parliament by my-

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

self as Minister of Labour. It was a measure for the drafting of which I was responsible. It was as far as I know the first measure that was at all effective as a means of investigating alleged anti-social practices of large businesses in the nature of combines, monopolies, trusts and mergers. That act was passed in 1909, and remained on the statutes until a Conservative administration came into office. In 1919 when the Union government had begun to lose its union complexion and became more and more a Conservative government, the act was repealed, and in its place was substituted what was called the Fair Prices Act as well as the Board of Commerce Act. The Prime Minister talks about measures being declared *ultra vires*. Both those measures were declared *ultra vires*. The Combines Act had been previously repealed, so that the country was left without any measure to investigate the anti-social practices of large commercial institutions in the nature of combines, monopolies, mergers, trusts and the like. When, however, a Liberal government was returned in 1921, there being no legislation of the kind, a measure of state intervention providing for the investigation of combines, monopolies, mergers, trusts and the like, was at the time I was holding the office of prime minister re-introduced and re-enacted. It was introduced by the then Minister of Labour the Hon. James Murdock, who brought in the measure at the instance of the government.

The hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Rowe) this afternoon said, "We had a lot of mergers during the period that act was on the statute books." Certainly there were mergers, because mergers were the order of the day all over the world. This act was not aimed against mergers as such. They were in the same class under the act as combines, monopolies or any other agency that might operate in restraint of trade. The provisions of the act were not intended to prohibit parties in Canada from combining or forming a merger or anything of that sort wherever business endeavoured to hold its own in competition with similar concerns in other provinces or in other parts of the world. They were, however, intended to cope with the inimical effects of large combination where its operations were against the public interest. It was because large combination was so powerful, because it could in one way or another take advantage of those in unprotected spheres of life, that this measure was enacted. I will not go into the details at present because the question will undoubtedly come up for discussion on another occasion.