

*Combines Investigation Act*

In that connection I wish to read one or two paragraphs from the remarks of the Minister of Justice, who was present during the sittings of the committee. And I shall read also a few remarks of Senator Lambert, a man known to all of us. I would read particularly with regard to the setting up of the committee and its relationship to the MacQuarrie committee report.

It seemed to me that at times the language used by the Minister of Justice was such as to indicate that it was the MacQuarrie report against the world, and that the only purpose for holding this committee at all was to permit people to come in—and here the language surprises me—to permit the people to come in and, as suggested at page 247, show that the report is “not in order.” Then the next line speaks about the “validity of the report.” I find those phrases—and I will read more of them—rather puzzling. It sounds like finding whether a motorcar is working, or whether an arithmetic question is right or wrong. This was a matter of opinion on a difficult and elusive subject. It seemed to me, from the words used by the minister, that they indicated an unwise attitude toward the proceedings of the committee.

Let me read at greater length from the minister's words as they are reported at page 246 of the proceedings:

Now, while there may be differences of opinion as to the competence of the MacQuarrie committee we have never had any other view from the time we appointed it but that it was a thoroughly competent committee, and that it has done a thoroughly complete job. It has taken a long time to do it and has gone very thoroughly into the whole matter. It did receive extensive briefs, and had long discussions. It did not curtail discussions in any way and it has done a job which if this committee were to do it would take from now until at least next summer—

That calculation, I thought, was a generous one. I do not know why the minister said “summer” rather than “spring” or, for that matter, “autumn.” But that was the word he used. And he continues:

—and we thus could never contemplate any legislation in the main session of parliament.

Then in the next paragraph he referred to the officials of the combines investigation branch, and went on to say:

With the advantage of their views in the matter, we fully accepted the report.

That is the MacQuarrie report.

As some of the speakers who have just spoken in this committee have indicated, we, in the speech from the throne and in the debate in the House of Commons, committed ourselves to the acceptance of the report and to the introduction of legislation based upon it.

“Committed ourselves” he says, “to the acceptance of the report”. I do not wish to

[Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood).]

discuss the language used, but it seems to me that must have been a little discouraging to the committee, because it almost seemed to suggest that the door was pretty well banged, barred and bolted; that they might go through the motions of considering the report, and could have a lot of good fun out of it, but what they said could not amount to much.

I want to read again from page 247, where the minister said:

If, as Mr. Carroll said a moment ago, it appeared, during the course of the representations which they made as the hearings went on, that they—

And I think “they” refers to the people who are opposed.

—were able to discharge the onus which is upon them of showing that the report is not in order, and made it appear there was some doubt about the validity of the report, then I think this committee would be warranted in digging into all the same matters the MacQuarrie committee had considered. But if we get from the representations that are made before us no argument that convinces us that there is anything wrong with the report I cannot see where we have any conscientious duty to go over the whole field that has already been covered very thoroughly by the MacQuarrie committee.

Now, that is a point of view. But I suggest again that the committee, when they heard that said, must have felt, “Well, what does all this amount to? Are we going through a lot of waste motion?” It is for that reason I want to go on to some further quotations. On the next page I read what Senator Lambert said. I know Senator Lambert is not a partisan of any kind; certainly I do not think he is a partisan for the Conservative party. I quote him as a man of independence, and I am interested in what he says. These are his words at page 248 of the proceedings:

I think it is very important in considering this matter now to associate the MacQuarrie report and the inquiry which we are making into the MacQuarrie report with the beginnings of this whole undertaking, which is the Curtis commission's prices inquiry. Now, the essential instruction in connection with the price inquiry by the Curtis commission, the essential instruction given by the prime minister of that day was that it should bring to bear upon the situation the whole moral effect of public opinion in this country—

You see that is exactly what the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) has been suggesting should be done, that we should have the benefit of public opinion in this country. And it is interesting to note that that is exactly what Senator Lambert thought should be done.

Then I go on from there to read:

—and that it was not intended to legislate particularly or to witch hunt for particular factors or situations.