

in the way that the natural resources of the country could best be conserved and protected. The work of that Commission has been of great service and value to the country, and I for one cannot see how that work can be taken over by any department and dealt with in the same way as it has been by the Commission. I think that the members of the Commission and its officers have done really valuable and useful service to Canada. From the fact of their being appointed on a Commission which was to a certain extent independent of the Government, they were able to take an independent view of the resources of the country and to make recommendations that could not be made by any officials working directly under a department of the Government. I do not intend to dwell upon this question long, because when the Bill comes before the Senate we can discuss it very much more fully; but I think that the Government are making a mistake in proposing to repeal the Act which established the Conservation Commission.

On the other hand, I should not have been at all surprised if the Government had suggested in the Speech from the Throne that they were going to bring in a Bill to abolish the Board of Commerce. Honourable gentlemen will remember that the Board of Commerce Bill was brought into this House in the dying days of the Session and that this Chamber at any rate had very little time or opportunity to give consideration to that legislation. I do not think that the Government or anybody else can be very well satisfied with the result of it or with the way that the affairs of that Board have been carried out. We had a very notable instance of the way in which the Board of Commerce was doing its duty last year. On the 9th of October, 1920, the sugar refiners waited upon the Government asking that cheap American sugar be not allowed to enter into Canada. I presume the refiners at that time felt that they were thoroughly justified in making such a request of the Government. Inasmuch as the Board of Commerce has endeavoured to control the price that the refiners of Canada should obtain during the war. When this question came before the people and they realized that an attempt was being made by the sugar refiners to keep up the price of sugar and prevent American sugar coming into this country, there was a general howl all over the country. On the 11th of October the refiners again interviewed the Government, and on the 14th day of October the Board

of Commerce endeavoured to fix the price of sugar at 21 cents a pound. I think that up to that time nearly everybody in the country thought that the Board of Commerce was practically a defunct body. The chairman of the board had resigned some considerable time before, and during last Session the other two members of the board also resigned, and for the time being the gentleman who was appointed secretary of the board in the first instance was acting as chairman. I think some question was raised, and it was stated that the only object of that gentleman acting as chairman of the board was practically for the purpose of winding up the affairs of the board; and a couple of employees out of other departments of the Government were appointed to act with him for the purpose of dealing with the situation as it then existed.

As I have said, before this decision of the board was given on October 14th, I do not think anybody throughout the length and breadth of the land thought that the board was an active, live body dealing with questions that might come before it. It therefore came as a great surprise to the people from one end of the country to the other that the board should act and should try to fix the price of sugar at that time, especially when the price in the United States was falling every day, and when the people considered that we should be getting cheaper sugar in Canada at the same time.

It was stated, of course, that this action was taken by the board; but we find that on the 9th of October the sugar refiners appealed directly to the Government, when there were present the Premier and other members of the Government. Again, on the 11th of October, when the second interview was granted, the Premier and Sir George Foster and the Hon. C. J. Doherty were present, and therefore must have known exactly what the situation was and what was going to be done in regard to the matter. They, therefore, I think should be held responsible for the action of the Board of Commerce in regard to this question. On the 15th of October, somewhat to the surprise of everybody, the Cabinet suspended the Board of Commerce order pending a hearing, and from that time on sugar was practically allowed to take its ordinary course in the market the same as any other commodity.

After such an exhibition of the work of the Board of Commerce, I think that the Government would have been well advised had they proposed now to repeal the Act which was put through for the purpose