

The Budget—Mr. Perron

There is another question I would like to deal with briefly and which concerns the price of pulpwood in the province. It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that the price of pulpwood is much too low when compared with the cost of paper.

The hon. member for Bonaventure suggested a minimum price of \$15 per cord. Objectively speaking, being one who has never bought or sold any, I believe that the price should be much higher, in the neighbourhood of \$25 or \$30. When paper was cheaper, indeed much cheaper, companies paid from \$25 to \$30 per cord. In my opinion, such an amount would be fair to the farmers and settlers of the province. However, prices offered by the companies during the last season have been extremely low, so much so that the hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) had an inquiry made to ascertain whether there was collusion between the various companies to fix the sale price, so as to do away with competition. I congratulate the hon. Minister of Justice for having instituted that inquiry.

I am sure that this thing will be inquired into with that earnestness and that fair-mindedness typical of such inquiries.

However I should like to refer to a point which I note in the speech of the hon. member for Bonaventure, and which shows that my hon. friend was not in earnest. Here are his words as reported on page 3248 of *Hansard* for April 28:

2. I respectfully urge—

The hon. member wanted the provincial government to set a minimum price. I quote:

I respectfully urge the Hon. Maurice Duplessis, premier of the province of Quebec, and the members of his government, to adopt an order in council fixing the minimum price to be paid to pulpwood producers in the province of Quebec. Such a minimum price would have to be at least \$15 a cord, delivered at a truck loading site, for the eastern part of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada is most assuredly one of the most learned members of the Canadian bar. With your permission—if I may be allowed to digress—I would like to point out that this year marks the fiftieth anniversary of his admission to the bar of the province of Quebec. This happy occasion will be observed in Quebec city next Saturday, at the same time as the similar anniversary of the chief justice of Quebec, and of other distinguished members of the bench and bar. Chief Justice Albert Sevigny, by the way, once sat as Conservative member

for Dorchester in this house before becoming its Speaker, a position which you now occupy with such dignity and which he himself also occupied with great dignity.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity, even though the Prime Minister is not in the house at this time, to offer him my congratulations and my best wishes for a long and happy life.

To come back to the point, the member for Bonaventure has asked the provincial government to set the price of the wood at \$15 a cord. I wanted to state that he had committed a great legal heresy when he made that statement and that the legal sense of the Prime Minister must have been shocked by such a request on the part of a government member.

No doubt about it, from the legal and constitutional point of view, no government has the right to fix the selling price of a given product unless as a measure of national emergency, as was the case during the last war when the federal government fixed and froze prices, under the authority granted by the War Measures Act. Outside of that, apart from those measures of national emergency, the fixing of prices is a legal impossibility under the system which now prevails in Canada.

Mr. Arsenault: May I direct a question to the hon. member?

Mr. Perron: Not now. I am coming to my conclusion and I have only a few more words to say. You may do so when I am finished.

In my opinion, the only way to act in the matter was to make an inquiry, as was done, and besides to ask the lumber companies to increase the prices paid to farmers, prices which are ridiculously low when compared with the price of paper and those companies' financial statements. There is nothing we can do now but wait for the result of that investigation, which will be properly carried out, I am sure.

Before resuming my seat, I beg the government to do everything in its power to tackle the agricultural problem prevailing throughout the country, thereby solving the economic problem of all Canadians.

Mr. Arsenault: Can the hon. member tell me whether it is the duty of the Quebec provincial government to do something for people who sell and produce pulpwood? Second, why did the government of the province of Quebec deem it advisable to set a