

Combines Investigation Act

house in any way it would have been possible for me to have put the interpretation upon what had happened that I had not got the report at all on December 29, that the report had come along at some later date, as in fact is the actual case. When the question was asked in the house to be perfectly frank with the house I did not remember when it had come in. But the formal covering letter on my file indicated the date as December 29. I passed on that information because I believed it was absolutely correct, and so it was in the sense that this letter did enclose what purported to be a flour report.

Mr. Knowles: Would the minister indicate the date that he would regard for his purposes as being the date on which the report was finally received?

Mr. Garson: I intend to do that as I go along. There were the changes that I spoke of. Other discussions took place at various times during the spring and summer months in connection with the report. Again I want to emphasize that at no time have I ever made the slightest suggestion to Mr. McGregor that he change the report, that he play anything down, that he play anything up, that he add anything to it or that he withdraw. I have not made that suggestion directly and I have taken good care that I did not make it indirectly to be passed on to him through somebody else. By this time I was beginning to have some apprehension about this matter.

Mr. Harkness: Rightly so.

Mr. Garson: While I was most anxious, as I think any hon. member would be if he had been in my shoes, that these divergences of opinion at a high civil service level should be reconciled in some way in a report wherein there would be no disagreement evidenced by two divergent opinions, I did not attempt to suggest to anybody that that should be accomplished in any other way than by the free exercise by Mr. McGregor of the absolute discretion which is vested in him by the statute in respect of this report.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Did he never suggest publication?

Mr. Garson: Of course he did. I have just finished telling my hon. friend we discussed that on January 22. I may say that, notwithstanding Mr. McGregor's observing that we had already passed the time for publication, the fact that we did not publish at least enabled him to make amendments to the report.

Mr. Coldwell: When was the last amendment?

Mr. Garson: February 23, 1949.

[Mr. Garson.]

Mr. Knowles: While parliament was in session.

Mr. Garson: That is right.

Mr. Drew: That was after the dental judgment, was it not?

Mr. Garson: No, the dental judgment was on February 28, and we did not hear about it until a few days afterwards.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, if that be so, I would just ask the minister this—

Mr. Howe: What is this?

Mr. Diefenbaker: I have not asked the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) anything.

Mr. Howe: I happen to be leading the house at the moment. Suppose my hon. friend asks his question.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I was going to, but you interrupted, and apparently interrupted my hon. friend before. The question I want to ask concerns the explanation the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) gave for not publishing the report, namely, the outcome of the dental case in Ontario. Why did he give that explanation when the dental case had been concluded at that time?

Mr. Garson: If my hon. friend will just contain himself, in due course I will trespass upon his attention to bring out that very point. This is by no means a simple matter, and I think that I would make better progress if questions were not quite so frequent.

Mr. Knowles: Or so pointed.

Mr. Diefenbaker: You might make a better explanation.

Mr. Garson: I was hopeful until the very end, and perhaps wrongly so, that Mr. McGregor would at least record, in an addendum to the report if not in the report itself, the views of the wartime prices and trade board officials, Mr. Gordon and Mr. Taylor, which were so inconsistent with his own, in order that the report with an addendum of that sort would be a document setting forth completely all of the relevant facts concerning the matter with which it dealt. The final attempt at reconciliation of these viewpoints took the form of a lengthy three hour meeting held in my office on Saturday, October 22, attended by Mr. McGregor, Mr. Gordon and Mr. Taylor. I have been informed within the last few days that subsequent to this meeting Mr. Taylor—and again may I emphasize absolutely on his own responsibility and without the slightest suggestion from myself—went to Mr. McGregor on October 26 and urged that he should at least insert in the report an additional page or two setting forth