

*Combines Investigation Act*

referred to the length of this debate and the number of speakers who have taken part in it. I am not suggesting that the number of people who took part in the debate on the speech from the throne is relevant to this bill. I will be very brief. I am just dealing with what I thought was an inference of the hon. member, or the suggestion which emerges from the remarks of the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart, that this matter had been really pretty adequately debated already. The point of my remarks and of the comparison I have just completed was that in view of the length of time devoted to the speech from the throne and the number of speakers who took part and the number of amendments and divisions, there having been no suggestion at any time that that debate was unduly protracted or the subjects there discussed at too great length, I hardly think the suggestion, if such was contained in his remarks this morning, should properly apply to the debate on this measure, which in my view is the most important to come before the house in a very long time.

In the course of consideration of this bill and these amendments I think it is important for us to bear in mind the question of the interest of those affected. This morning the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggart mentioned some of the organizations which submitted opinions opposed to the present practice of resale price maintenance, and therefore he said favouring this legislation. I point out that none of the briefs presented was favourable to the government legislation because none of them knew what the form of the legislation was going to be. I think it correct, however, to say that the briefs did indicate they were opposed to the present practice of resale price maintenance. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is also correct to say that every one of the briefs, even those opposed to the practice, did make it abundantly clear that in their view it was urgent that there should be some protection for the retail merchants against the dangers of loss leaders and unfair competition to which they would probably be exposed, if the price maintenance practice was eliminated.

I make one exception there which I think I should make, in the interests of accuracy, and that is the brief submitted by the Canadian Congress of Labour. In his evidence, as set out in that brief, Dr. Forsey said he did not regard the matter as one of urgency, because in his view and in the view of his congress the likelihood of harm resulting from the abolition of resale price maintenance was not very imminent. But I think that is the only exception to the statement I have made that the briefs submitted, even on the part of those opposed to the practice, made

[Mr. Fulton.]

it clear that they felt it was urgent and vital that if resale price maintenance was to be eliminated, then the retailer should be protected.

I should like particularly again to emphasize the brief submitted by the trades and labour congress, and also the evidence given by Mr. Bengough when he appeared before the committee. In answer to a question as to whether he thought if we outlaw price maintenance we should provide for protection against loss leading Mr. Bengough said, as reported at page 372:

I think it would be vital it should be done.

I wish also to emphasize that the trades and labour congress in a most responsible brief, a brief which contained measured and well-considered language, indicated that although on the whole they felt that the system of price maintenance as at present practised should not be continued, they made it abundantly clear that they felt it should not be eliminated *carte blanche* without any other protection to the merchant. They felt it should not be eliminated until some other form of protection for the retail trade had been fixed. As I say, while they say that on balance they are not in agreement with the system of price maintenance, they make no wholesale condemnation of it. They said, in effect: We recognize the necessity for it. We recognize the necessity for protection. We recognize the steps by which this practice has grown up. We recognize it has grown up simply as a protective device worked out by retail merchants themselves.

May I draw your attention particularly to that part of the brief of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, where, at page 382, they say:

Working people learned very early in the industrial period that, despite the law and the attitude of the state, it was necessary to combine to protect themselves, their families and their interest. Perhaps, from the employers' point of view, some combination is necessary for their protection regardless of the attitude of the state. While we may all agree that private arrangements such as resale price fixing which restrict a free economy and the competitive flow of prices and goods are undesirable, it may still be true that economic necessity, as that is experienced by the person, or organization directly involved, may dictate that some such arrangement is imperative. Under such conditions it would seem readily apparent, that failing provision of some social control facilities by the state, private groups and organizations within the economy will at all times act for their own protection and self-preservation.

Mr. Speaker, nothing I think could put the matter more clearly than those well-considered words of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. They recognize the fact that this system of price maintenance has grown up and has been designed by merchants and