

Combines Investigation Act

Mr. Hosking: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. Since I have come under discussion, and since I allowed to stand in *Hansard* one word which I should have had deleted, namely the word "wanted", I should like for the information of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew)—and I imagine he is not trying to be facetious—

Mr. Drew: Oh, no.

Mr. Hosking:—to state that I said—and most of the hon. members in the house realize that is what I meant—I had received some few telegrams objecting to this legislation. That was my inference in the first instance. I then said that I had inquired from many small shopkeepers who were enjoying some form of price maintenance in the products they sell at the present time whether they had instigated the practice of price maintenance; and in every case they said they had had nothing whatever to do with its instigation. It was therefore something that was thrust on them. Perhaps at the present moment they are enjoying some benefits, but as time went on they would reap the disadvantages which must necessarily come from it. While that is going on all the purchasers of course would suffer at the same time.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Wellington South has indicated he feels that perhaps he would have wished to slightly vary the statement he made at that time; but the fact remains—

Mr. Hosking: Just delete one word.

Mr. Drew:—it was in relation to the statement he did make, as reported, that these objections were taken. In any event I hope the hon. member will have ample opportunity to meet the retail merchants in Guelph when he returns. I do hope he will be able to return for Christmas day, and on that occasion he will be able to find out just exactly what they do think about this matter. I also think that it will be extremely helpful if other hon. members have that opportunity. That is why I so strongly hope that even at this stage of the session the government will decide to withdraw this measure and hold it over until the next session. By doing that they could still use whatever time remains while we are here on this occasion to deal with other very important matters that are still on the order paper.

I do want to assure the members of the government and the members of this house that we are opposing this measure in the belief that it will do great injury to the people of Canada if it becomes law. In this we are fighting what we believe to be the cause of

the people of Canada. We believe we are fighting against monopolies which would be created by this legislation now before us.

A suggestion has been made that opposition to this measure indicates the support of big business. What a travesty; what a complete perversion of the facts. The fact is, as the hon. member for York South pointed out, there is no doubt that if this measure becomes law, without the most adequate safeguards against loss-leader transactions and unfair price cutting, the small merchant will go to the wall. That is what he said. That is what many of us believe. We have pointed out that the only safeguard that remains is the dusty weapon which has never been taken off the shelf by this government. They are prepared to shoot the patient with another weapon, but they are not prepared to use the weapon that already exists, and which could keep away the offender who might really do some harm to the Canadian people if there were any wrongdoing of this kind.

It is so easy to suggest that big business would be opposed to this measure. Well, we saw what big business thought about this. We saw what the biggest business in Canada thought about it. I wish to qualify that remark by statements I have made before. I for one do not believe that bigness of itself is any cause for criticism. I think we would simply be hiding from our eyes the great advances that have taken place in merchandising if we did not recognize that the big stores in this country have played their full part in developing the efficiency of merchandising generally. The big stores have their place, and the small stores have their place. We do point out, however, that the small merchants are closer to the people; that the small merchants throughout Canada generally are those upon whom people rely from day to day. Neither should we on the one hand disregard the rights of the big businesses to do their business legitimately, nor on the other should we under any circumstances do something that will almost automatically remove any safeguard for the small merchants who would be affected in this way. Once again I remind the house that it is not only the members of this party who have stated the dangers that exist, but others as well have pointed out that the small merchant will go to the wall if he has no basis of legitimate protection against practices which he could not possibly contend with.

Then again let us consider what would happen if this legislation were delayed until next session. It would not become law perhaps until March or April. What difference would that make? The Prime Minister has