

He went on:

Having been rejected by the Prime Minister, the bill found itself on the doorstep of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson).

Well, the bill has not been rejected by the Prime Minister, nor by any of his colleagues. The bill is the government's recommendation to parliament to deal with a problem which is recognized even by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) himself, in his speech on Friday. We see this at page 2353 of *Hansard*:

We recognize the fact that there are practices which should be under restraint. We recognize the fact—as it has been recognized in earlier attempts which have been made in this house to pass legislation—that there are practices which should be stopped.

That is also recognized by the government, and was recognized by the committee. The measure we are putting forward before the house is a government recommendation to put under restraint these practices which should be under restraint, and to deal with practices that should be stopped by stopping them. Then the leader of the opposition went on to say:

What I said was that I did not think at this stage we should seek to draft the bill, but rather that we should assert as a principle that we want this measure held back so there might be further inquiry, and so the advisability of having a fair trade commission—

And so on. And when the question was put to him by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low), he said:

Without in any way seeking to evade the question, may I point out, as I did in the answer I just gave to the hon. member for Peace River, that we are not putting forward a bill, and that we are not attempting to cross the "t's" and to dot the "i's."

Well, we are attempting, in putting forward a bill, to cross the "t's" and to dot the "i's". This subamendment is a proposal to prevent that from being done, and instead to give consideration to something which the hon. member himself and his party realize and have stated frankly is, under present conditions, within the jurisdiction of provincial legislatures. It was held in 1935 that the prohibitive portions of section 498A of the Criminal Code were within federal jurisdiction, and constituted valid legislation.

If, as I trust this house will find, and this parliament will find, there are resale price maintenance practices which should be under restraint, practices which should be stopped, the only way I know of to stop them under federal jurisdiction is the way which is proposed in this bill. And, after all, what does the bill provide? Merely that there shall not be a system of price controls organized by private agreement and enforced without responsibility to this parliament, without responsibility to the government, and without responsibility to the House of Commons, by

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such coercive measures as those who provide the product, the resale price of which is fixed, choose to exercise themselves.

We think that is not good practice. We think that under present conditions there would be no warrant for attempting to interfere otherwise with the economy of the Canadian nation than by prohibiting the things that are wrong.

There has been much debate in the house about the possible effect on some 700,000 retail traders, and of the right this would give them to take, as they should, the responsibility for prices they ask their customers to pay for the merchandise they buy from them.

On the other hand it is suggested that this is not going to have much effect on the cost of living index. I still do not think it will have very much effect on the cost of living index; but I do feel that any effect it is going to have is going to be toward a reduction of some of those prices, and toward the prevention of an upward surge of prices. And that is a fact which will be appreciated by the whole of the Canadian consuming public.

When it is suggested that it will not have much effect on prices for the consumers, and in the same breath suggested that it will destroy 700,000 retail merchants, then I think one argument cancels out the other.

**Mr. Drew:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would point out that in his enthusiasm I do not think the Prime Minister should introduce a statement that has not been made. There is no suggestion that it would destroy 700,000, but that it will threaten a lot of the smaller merchants in this country.

**Mr. St. Laurent:** I think the record of the speeches made by the hon. member for Eglington (Mr. Fleming) and the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) speaks for itself; and they can be interpreted by anyone who chooses to look at the record. It was not the view of the MacQuarrie committee, and it was not the view of the committee of the house, and it is not the view of the government that, under present conditions, there is any likelihood of this injury to any substantial number of small retailers.

I made the statement the other day, and I repeat it, that if as a result of this legislation or as a result of any other condition there develops a contrary abuse, the government will consider what recommendation it should make to parliament to deal with that contrary abuse. Because that is the only jurisdiction parliament has over these matters.

Here it is recognized that there are practices that should be under restraint, and that