

Supply—Justice

handle trash in order to get the agency for the other magazines. This is something for the Minister of Justice to look into. So far as I am concerned there is a situation developing in connection with crime comics and other magazines which should not be allowed. The sooner it is stopped, the better.

As I said earlier I have some letters here which I could read to the minister. If he wants to see them, I shall be glad to send them over to him. I think it is unfair, when we have an agent of the calibre of the man we have in Medicine Hat, a good family man, that he is compelled to handle all the trash that comes along. If he does not handle it he loses the agency for every other magazine. I hope the minister will take this all into consideration and see that the Combines Investigation Act is used to stop this sort of thing.

Mr. Fulton: Before the minister replies to that I have—

Mr. Garson: I think I should reply to this.

Mr. Fulton: But I have a suggestion to make.

Mr. Garson: But my remarks will perhaps obviate the necessity for the suggestion. We have already taken action by passing laws to prohibit crime comics. The enforcement of those laws, in so far as prosecutions under them are concerned, is entirely the responsibility of the provincial attorneys general. When a publishing company, as a condition to furnishing its purchasers with copies of decent magazines, insists that they take a lot of trash of this sort through the exercise of what perhaps may be some monopoly position, then we have regarded that as the responsibility of the combines investigation branch. Several days ago we took action in this very matter upon the basis of complaints that came to us from the province of the hon. member. In so far as it lies within our power we want to back up a news dealer who is decent and honourable enough that he will even entertain the possibility of some sacrifice to himself rather than handle this rubbish.

Mr. Wylie: I want to thank the minister for that information. I do think something must be done. We know that it is up to the provincial governments to see that decent literature is placed on the newsstands. We did pass a law here in 1949 in connection with crime comics. At that time there was a long debate on the matter, and I took part in it. Perhaps I got into trouble with some of the publishers in Toronto. If those publishers in Toronto still want to publish that trash, let us not conceal it. Let us make them put it right out in the open, and not cover it up with a plain piece of paper.

Mr. Fulton: I have been waiting until this stage because, along with the member for

Medicine Hat, I feel that the question has now reached serious proportions. As he has said, in 1949 the minister, in a spirit of the utmost co-operation, accepted a suggestion which came at that time from here and he went the whole way and introduced as a government measure a bill banning crime comics. Like the member for Medicine Hat, though I will not take the time to do it at this stage, I could produce a great volume of representations to the effect that crime comics, while they have disappeared in their previous form, are taking new forms and to some extent are being replaced by most offensive sex and other forms of trashy material. "Trashy" is not quite the right word, because this stuff is dangerous.

While I agree with the minister that the responsibility for law enforcement is provincial, I should like to see more effort in that direction to make the legislation effective. Nevertheless, I think the situation is developing to the point where existing legislation does not cover the new types of offensive and harmful material which have appeared. I appreciate that this is an extremely difficult subject. I am not going to be dogmatic or didactic as to the form in which the legislation might be enacted. I merely put this out as a suggestion. It seems to me it is comparatively easy—I say only comparatively easy—to define the offence of publishing crime comics, because the literature itself is dealing with something which is a crime. Because sex, love and such things are not crimes, it is extremely difficult to draft a definition stating when literature dealing with these subjects is offensive and should be banned, and when it is not offensive and should not be banned. I realize it is very difficult. But I think an effort has to be made because I think the earlier situation is again reaching the position where some legislative action must be taken.

I suggest, therefore, and I shall not enlarge upon it at this time, that the minister might consider between now and the next session the appointment of a committee of this house to look into the whole question of comic literature, and to consider whether legislation could be enacted which would provide an effective control of this type of offensive literature without any invasion of the freedom of the press. It seems to me that the problem is to reconcile the question of controlling and proving the publication of offensive literature, and at the same preserving the freedom of the press. I think it is a problem which it is not beyond the capacity of the members of this house and of the Senate, who are experts in the law, to solve. I think it is a problem which does require to be dealt