

*Combines Investigation Act*

We feel it is not fair to the consumer to leave the manufacturer with a free hand to fix the price of his goods to the retailer. The Conservatives of course will argue that it provides for competition and that that competition prevents the manufacturer from fixing his price too high. They would probably tell us that the consumer's interest is safeguarded under the present price maintenance system. If manufacturers as a class are to be given the right to fix the prices of their goods, and if that system is spreading and becoming more general with larger and larger sections of our economy being affected by the practice of price maintenance, I do not think any of us are naive enough to believe that the consumer's interest is going to be adequately protected under that system. It is for that reason we suggest, as did the trades and labour congress in their brief to the committee, that control should be exercised by means of a board subject to the authority of parliament.

As a matter of fact, in their brief the retail druggists of Ontario point out that in recent years prices of wheat, milk and the wages of employees have been regulated by law. We maintain that if it is necessary, as I believe it is, that prices should be maintained in certain spheres for the protection of the small storekeeper, that protection should be such as will afford protection to the consumer as well as to the manufacturer and to the retailer. There is nothing unfair in suggesting that. It is a procedure to which every trade union in the country is being subjected. It is a procedure by which the farmers of this country sell their wheat. It is the procedure by which milk prices are regulated in the larger communities. It is a procedure that can be fair to the manufacturer, that can be fair to the retailer and can take the interests of the consumer into account.

I point out, Mr. Speaker, that the legislation before us is incomplete. It is unfortunate that the government should be introducing this legislation so late in the session. They now feel that to accept our amendment will mean that they will not be able to bring in any legislation regarding price maintenance this session. I would merely like to point out that I fail to understand what the government expects to gain or just how they expect to serve the public interest by rushing through legislation that is incomplete, and will probably have to be reconsidered as soon as its effects upon our economy are observed. I do not think we need any combines investigation, I do not think we need any stacks of statistics, to know that without some

[Mr. Noseworthy.]

degree of protection firms such as the T. Eaton Company and the chain stores will eventually push the small businessman to the wall. I believe most of us in this house are old enough to have observed during our lifetime what happens under those circumstances. It is, therefore, in the interests of the retailer, in the interests of the manufacturers and consumers of this country, that we propose that this bill be reconsidered; that it be not now read a second time, but that consideration be given to means whereby these various sections of our economy may be protected.

I might point out that the interim report of the MacQuarrie committee recognized that it had not given complete study to this problem. There was the question of loss leaders for which, at that time, the committee had no remedy to offer. It is true they point out that under present conditions there is not much of that being done, and there may be ample time to devise some legislation that will protect the small dealers against loss leaders. The minister went to great lengths to try to assure the retail trade that they would not suffer by reason of this legislation. I prefer, Mr. Speaker, to accept the opinion of the retailers of this country as against the judgment of the minister. I take it that they know their business better even than does the learned Minister of Justice.

I take it that these retailers are not protesting purely on grounds of selfish interests. I refuse to accept the explanation that these retailers are being pressured into their protest by the larger manufacturers. I believe they have a real cause for protest; and, as the leader of this group says, we sympathize with them in the dilemma in which they find themselves with this legislation facing them. I would again urge the government to give consideration to the recommendation put before the committee by the trades and labour congress, that where protection is needed for the retailers it be given on exactly the same terms and in exactly the same way as trade unions and others are protected, by a board which is directly responsible to this parliament.

**Mrs. Ellen L. Fairclough (Hamilton West):** The amendment which has been moved by the member for Rosetown-Biggar (Mr. Coldwell) has not appeared in quite the form in which I had expected it. I am, therefore, led to guess as to its complete meaning. But I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member meant it to apply somewhat to fair trade laws which could be passed. With this in mind, I should like to compliment him upon evolving