

Combines Investigation Act

to read. They will tell him exactly what he must do, and if he does that he will keep out of the rain, the rain in this case being the punitive forces which would insist upon recognition of that parasol. That is soft trading, soft competition.

I must say that I really was greatly encouraged when I heard the hon. member for York South giving what I understood to be a clear exposition of the middle road in trade, what we might regard as sound competition. I understood him to advocate that type of competition which on the one hand recognizes the dangers of unrestrained and unbridled competition, and on the other hand the weakening effects of complete control of prices and details of that kind by government agencies.

Mr. Herridge: The member for York South was supporting our amendment.

Mr. Drew: That is exactly the difficulty which was presented in my mind, because I thought the member for York South had put forth a sound argument in favour of that type of competition which on the one hand recognizes the dangers of unbridled and unlimited competition, and on the other hand recognizes the dangers of the parasol regimented type of competition, call it what you will. Most certainly he did recognize the dangers of the situation which would be created by this measure. Because of that I find it difficult to understand how he is going to vote for this measure when that time ultimately does come.

I have sought to emphasize, in every way I can, the fact that a great deal more attention should be paid to this subject and there should be an opportunity for further consideration. May I express the most earnest hope that when the members go home for Christmas, even if it is only for one day, the merchants in their communities seek them out and indicate exactly what they think of a measure of this kind. It will be most helpful to the members of this house if all the merchants of this country will make sure that, on that single day when members are home, they take the opportunity to tell the members exactly what they do think about this legislation. I feel quite sure a number of the merchants in Guelph are going to call upon the hon. member for Wellington South (Mr. Hosking) when he gets home. After all, that is democracy in operation. I am most hopeful that after that expression of opinion has been registered, many of the members will change their opinions on this subject.

Having said that, may I emphasize my own belief that this is a most difficult subject. It

[Mr. Drew.]

is one of the most complicated problems with which this or any other government will be called upon to deal. The balance between what is desirable in the way of preventing abuses and what would be undesirable in preventing legitimate and desirable practices is difficult to achieve. I do not think the measure before us provides any such balance. This measure is simply adopting the device of shooting the patient. This method cures the ailment, it is true, but then we have to wait for the grief that will follow that rather drastic method of dealing with certain abuses which may exist and which certainly should be dealt with under some effective device where they do exist. I assure hon. members that in taking the time we have—and we have not hesitated to take that time—we have done so in the hope that the government may come to the conclusion that it will be desirable to withdraw this measure for the time being to obtain further information. Then, on the basis of that further information, a measure could be drafted which would give us the best type of fair trade practices, in accordance with our own extensive experience and designed particularly for the Canadian economy, but nevertheless taking full advantage of the experience in other countries. This would ensure that when our legislation was passed into law each one of us would be convinced that it represented the best possible judgment of the high court of parliament.

Surely that is a worthy objective. Surely that is not something anybody can criticize. I assure hon. members that in the objections we have raised and the arguments we have put forward we have availed ourselves of the opportunity open to the opposition to express opinions which may at some point convince the government.

I say quite frankly that one of the advantages of the deliberate extension of a debate is that it is possible for the people themselves to learn what is taking place in parliament, and as a result of that knowledge communicate their views to the members of parliament. In the arguments we have made we have not hesitated to cover all the points that seemed to us to be related to this problem, with the idea that perhaps the government and its supporters may change their opinion and also that perhaps the people affected by this legislation, the consumer and the small merchant, might help to change the government's opinion. For that reason I am earnestly hoping that members in this house may have an opportunity to meet those they represent, and that all the merchants in the various communities will seek out their members and make sure those members do know what