

Combines Investigation Act

An hon. Member: Go and do what I did; go and consult your merchant.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): Then there is this question by the hon. member for Eglinton, with reference to the draft bill:

Q. You will recall it purports to propose blanket prohibition on resale prices. Would you think that is a proper and desirable way of going about this matter, that we have blanket prohibition, or if we are going to have legislation on it should it be left to determine whether in the particular case the particular type of agreement is in the given circumstances harmful to the public interest or not?

Mr. Bengough makes what I think is a very sensible answer. He said, "It would have to be flexible". Then the hon. member for Eglinton said, "You wouldn't favour a general prohibition", and Mr. Bengough's answer was "no". I bring this to your attention, Mr. Speaker, and I only hope that possibly members of the house will pay some attention to it. Here are sensible men occupying positions of high trust and responsibility, representing literally hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens, and who I am bound to say seem to me to approach this thing in a very sensible manner. They say: Let us have a look at the facts, and they are very shy about answering a lot of general and doctrinaire questions which are based on certain assumptions that not only have not been proved but concerning which apparently the government does not desire time to be given so we may find out whether or not they are capable of proof.

I have gone into that point at some length because I think, as the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) has said, that this is a matter of great importance; and when you have a matter of great importance you also often have a matter of great urgency. No one has suggested there is any urgency here. We do have a matter of importance, one that we think may have a very profound effect. Why the sensible and practical suggestion that we should stop, look and listen cannot be adopted is beyond my understanding.

I want to go back to the evidence of one of the witnesses heard fairly early in the sittings of the committee. I think it was before what you might call closure or quasi-closure had been clamped down on the committee. I am going to read part of the evidence of Mr. Harris. It would appear that at that time the committee was a little more open to receiving suggestions. I think it was before those emanations, those telepathic waves, began to pass between the minister and the chairman of the committee. The chairman of the committee has told us there was no communication, but it may have been in the air, and at any rate we

know that the clamp, closure, gag or whatever you may like to call it came down. Before it came down fully Mr. Harris gave some evidence at pages 257 and 258. He was speaking on behalf of the Canadian retail federation, and I want to read some statements he made.

Before doing so I should like to remind the house that a good many of these statements can be borne out by statements from responsible quarters and reported in the British pamphlet I read the other day. The minister will remember the name of it. In passing let me say there was a memorandum from another quarter which quoted at some length from a British white paper. I think that is some time later than the report from which I quoted the other day. All I can say is that in this British white paper they succeeded in ignoring some of the sober and serious statements made in the report after evidence had been given. If I may say so with respect to so august a body as the British government, it seemed to me they acted somewhat like our government. They were perfectly prepared to act on the basis of the things they liked to believe were facts.

For instance, I remember reading and *Hansard* will show that I read the other day a surprisingly strong statement, I thought, on behalf of the women purchasers. They spoke very strongly in favour of price maintenance saying they found it a great advantage to be able to know what they were getting, to have quality and not to have that most irritating feeling—and it is an irritating feeling—of buying something and then finding you could have bought it cheaper somewhere else. It is particularly irritating to the man with a name like mine, and I think the mental wear and tear that goes with that sort of thing is very serious indeed. I can understand these housewives.

Mr. Garson: It is kind of hard on us Scots.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): They want to be relieved from that form of nervous exhaustion. At any rate that was what they said, and in passing I could not help convey my considerable surprise that according to the quotation from the summary of the white paper the British government indicated that they did not think that was reasonable. They said it was not reasonable for women to believe that way, and therefore they could not have believed that way. I am not going to discuss the reasonableness of women. There are different views on that. Some people think women are more reasonable than other people believe them to be. I would say that as purchasers the opinion of women