

The hon. gentleman mentioned the "sudden rise in the cost of living." Well, when the government was drafting this motion, being anxious to gain as large a measure of support and agreement as possible from hon. gentlemen opposite, we thought it would be desirable to put in the word "recent" in order to have the motion accord with what my hon. friend felt was the most urgent matter. He was anxious that it was the recent increase that should be taken into account. May I just ask hon. members this question. Suppose the government had left out the word "recent" and the clause had read "the causes of the rise in the cost of living." What would we have heard from hon. gentlemen opposite? We would have been told that we were giving the committee an academic task, that of going into the causes of the rise in the cost of living, something which might take them back not only generations but possibly centuries; that we were deliberately trying to give the committee something to do which would take up all their time before they would get anywhere at all. I need not elaborate the point further, but I give this as an example—and it is an example which applies all along the way—of many of the points which have been raised, and to which exception has been taken and the government's motives misinterpreted and misconstrued.

Then I come to the question of recommendations, the next objection which was raised frequently—that the government had not put in a clause giving this committee power to make recommendations. Well, I would recall to hon. members what I said in introducing the motion, before anyone on the opposite side had spoken. I said the government had purposely left out that clause at this stage for the reason that we wished to have the committee get on with the work of investigating causes, that parliament and the public might know the results thereof as rapidly as possible; that had the committee been asked to make recommendations, we would have found that the time of the committee would be taken up, as is pretty obvious from the debate which has taken place here, by discussion between members of different parties as to which particular recommendation should be made, whether it would be a recommendation along the lines of my hon. friends of the Progressive Conservative party or a recommendation along the lines of the C.C.F. or along the lines of the Social Credit party, should that party have a recommendation that it might wish to make. Certainly, with a request for recommendations of this type, the time of the committee would be

taken up in a discussion of which particular recommendations they should make.

I need not take much time to point out the truth of what I am saying, and of how futile that might render the work of the committee. During this debate many references have been made to the committee which was appointed in 1934 to deal with the question of price spreads. That committee was given power to make recommendations; indeed it was asked to make recommendations, and what was the result? Well, the leader of the C.C.F. party (Mr. Coldwell) has told the house what was the result of giving that committee power to make recommendations. If hon. members will look at page 863 of *Hansard* for February 4 of this year they will find the following remarks by the leader of the C.C.F. group:

Reference has been made to the price spreads committee of 1934. I looked up the record to see how long it took that committee to make its report. On February 2, 1934, just fourteen years ago to the very day that we began to discuss the resolution now before us, the order of reference for the setting up of the committee passed this house. On February 22, twenty days later, the first meeting was held. The last meeting was on June 22, 1934. Then, as hon. members will recall, the committee became the royal commission. On October 30, 1934, the royal commission met for the first time. On February 1, 1935, one year later, the last meeting of the commission was held, and on April 9, 1935, it reported. Confirmation of what I have said will be found in the report of the commission which I have before me.

Imagine for a moment what would have happened if the government had said in this motion that the committee was to make recommendations! Would any hon. member suggest that this particular instance would not have been cited immediately by the leader of the C.C.F. and other hon. members opposite as a reason why we should not give the committee, at this stage, power to make recommendations? Does anyone suggest that we would not have been told that it would take two years before this house would get any word from the committee on which action could be taken one way or the other? Nothing could be plainer than that.

But what is even more to the point is what the hon. member himself was prepared to do with regard to one of the amendments which were before the house. It will be noticed that in the passage I quoted the leader of the C.C.F. party was talking about the committee on price spreads. He was presenting an argument showing how long it took that committee to make a report. The leader of the opposition had before the house an amendment which asked that the resolution