

The Royal Assent

attention to the fact that January is a month of sales in the stores of Canada. There is no question that, during the coming month of January, we shall see more of those sales than usual. As a result of the government's fiscal policy, as a result of having drained off unnecessary taxation from the people, as a result of their credit restrictions, as a result of the unemployment and part employment that has developed, stores across this country find their shelves loaded with goods that they have been unable to sell. There is no doubt that those shelves will be unloaded following the Christmas business, and I suspect that the government hopes to glean some measure of credit for this bill when those sales take place. The Minister of Justice can say to the Canadian public: Look, I told you so. We passed the price maintenance legislation at the end of the year and already prices are reduced throughout the country—prices, I may say, that would have been reduced in all probability, entirely regardless of what happened to this bill.

To give credit to the MacQuarrie committee, they did not suggest that this proposed legislation would have any effect upon the cost of living. They say on page 21 of their report:

The committee has studied resale price maintenance in the light of the two standards of judgment originally set up, namely, the desirability of a free economy and the need for economic efficiency.

The MacQuarrie committee, in their recommendation that price maintenance should be made illegal, were not thinking particularly of the cost of living, were not thinking particularly of the small retailer or merchant. It is the government that is thinking of them from a political standpoint. They were concerned only with preserving our free economy; and in the words of the report:

This study has led the committee to the general conclusion that resale price maintenance, on the growing scale now practised, is not justified by either of these standards. It represents a real and undesirable restriction on competition by private agreement or "law" and its general tendency is to discourage economic efficiency.

It becomes quite clear from the report that the MacQuarrie committee was concerned with the preservation of a free economy. I have no doubt that the government is also interested in the preservation of a free economy, and of course the official opposition is likewise interested in the preservation of a free economy.

What is true of course is that this bill is a culmination of a controversy that has developed among the supporters of the free economy system. On the one hand we have the Liberals and the T. Eaton Company of Canada supporting what they call free and open competition. I presume it is the kind of competition that Adam Smith recommended.

[Mr. Noseworthy.]

It may well be that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) has not studied much economics since he took some lectures on Adam Smith during his university days. I suggest that if he supplements what he learned about laissez-faire economy during his university days with something a little more up to date he will know that free competition within our free enterprise system as he visualizes it does not and cannot exist under present-day conditions.

The Conservatives, supported by the mass of the independent retailers throughout the country and by other groups, believe that we should have regulated and controlled competition within our free economic system. I use the phraseology "regulated and controlled competition" because that is the phrase which the pharmaceutical association, in their brief to the joint committee, used in connection with the practice of price maintenance. The financial expert of the official opposition, the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Macdonnell), made it quite clear to us in his speech that he did not believe in free and open competition. Evidently they believe that under conditions existing today there must be some regulation and some control.

THE ROYAL ASSENT

A message was delivered by Major C. R. Lamoureux, Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the Right Honourable the Deputy Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable house in the chamber of the honourable the Senate.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker with the house went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

Mr. Speaker informed the house that the Deputy Governor General had been pleased to give, in His Majesty's name, the royal assent to the following bills:

An act to implement the international convention for the regulation of whaling.

An act to implement the agreement between the parties to the North Atlantic treaty regarding the status of their forces, signed on the nineteenth day of June, 1951.

An act respecting the surveys of public lands of Canada.

An act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act.

An act to approve the financial agreement between Canada and the United Kingdom, signed on the twenty-ninth day of June, 1951.

An act to amend the Judges Act, 1946.

An act to provide for old age security.

An act to amend the Pension Act.

An act to amend the Canadian National-Canadian Pacific Act, 1933.

An act to amend the Maritime Freight Rates Act.

An act to amend the Canada-United States of America Tax Convention Act, 1943, and the Canada-United States of America Tax Convention Act, 1944.

An act to amend the Supreme Court Act.

An act to amend the Exchequer Court Act.

An act to amend an act respecting the Revised Statutes of Canada.