

opposite (Mr. Mackenzie King) talk of motives, and talk of ulterior purposes, and talk of the use of language in some subtle sense, and talk of shackles and of rivetings upon the people, I realized that this was all so much camouflage and a waste of time and, worse than that, an insult to the intelligence of any hon. member of this house, for surely the right hon. gentleman realizes—he has been in parliament long enough to realize—that the very first rule that governs with respect to legislation is this, that the plain and obvious meaning must be attached to words that are used in their ordinary sense. It is not open to the courts which in the end determine what meaning must be attached to the words in a statute to attribute to them meanings that are not apparent on the face of the words. They take the obvious and simple meanings that attach to words.

Last evening while the debate was proceeding I sent to the library to get a book which every lawyer knows well, with respect to the interpretation of statutes, and one of the very first rules laid down in that book is that words must be used in their ordinary sense.

It is a sound maxim of law that every word ought, *prima facie*, to be construed in its primary and natural sense, unless a secondary or more limited sense is required by the subject or the context.

All through it is stated that statutes are, and must always be, interpreted in the ordinary, plain meaning of the words.

There is nothing in this bill which requires any subtlety or requires any hon. gentleman opposite to attribute ulterior motives to those who prepared it. The bill is simply expressed in simple language. I might in passing say that the criticism urged against the measure by the hon. member for Hants-Kings (Mr. Ilsley) was a criticism that one might reasonably expect, a fair, reasoned criticism of the terms of the measure. It did not in any sense attribute to members on this side of the house or to the minister in charge of the bill any desire to perpetuate a particular system, or to fasten upon the people or shackle them or rivet upon them any particular form of legislation. It was a reasoned and thoughtful and considerate criticism of the measure on its merits. He found nothing in the language of the bill that was difficult to understand, neither did any other hon. gentleman who followed him except the right hon. leader of the opposition. But he found in every word something that was at variance with the plain ordinary meaning that is attached to the words and that would be attributed to them by any tribunal or by any man who

[Mr. Bennett.]

might read them. Just why he should endeavour to fasten upon this word and that word and give to it a limited meaning, or attribute to the authors of this legislation, the government of the day, a sinister purpose or an ulterior motive, I cannot for the life of me understand. Why is it that he always has ulterior thoughts in his mind? Why is it that he always deals with sinister things? Why is it that he is always talking about subtleties of language? The answer is simple and plain. Plain speaking, in simple terms, is something that he cannot understand because he has never been accustomed to it, because during the long years during which he was head of the government in this country language was used to disguise thought, and he cannot understand that there should be a government that uses language to express the plain meaning it has in mind—use clear unambiguous language, so that it is patent to everyone exactly what is meant.

In this bill we have endeavoured to create a tariff board. The amendment that was proposed, but which I shall not discuss, if you study its language with care, does endeavour to give a modified approval to the theory of a tariff board, but suggests that the only kind of a tariff board worth while is one that is a political appanage to the government of the day. That is all. That is what the amendment means, and what it says, that it must be a board over which the government has control. That is the first line of cleavage of thought between the government and the opposition. The government's theory of a tariff board is a tribunal clothed with power, possessing authority, and exercising jurisdiction to determine facts, to find facts on the evidence submitted, and that a finding of facts shall be just as much warranted on the evidence submitted as the judgment of a judge is warranted on the case he considers.

The leader of the opposition suggested that there was a great difference between social legislation and economic legislation and legislation of any other character. Whatever difference there may be in theory there is none in practice. Every statute of this parliament falls in the end to be interpreted by the courts of the country, the third branch of government. That is the reason why the appointment of judges becomes so all-important. Of all branches of our government there is none so important as the judiciary upon which is thrust at all times the duty of establishing the meaning that is to be attached to the statutes of the country and the interpretation of agreements between individuals themselves.

By this legislation, as I have said, we are endeavouring to create a tariff board. On