

Old Age Security

will be a clumsy committee, and it will not make rapid progress with this problem. It may serve the government's real purpose to have a clumsy committee which will be bogged down by its own numbers, but such a committee will not achieve the purposes the minister has pictured.

Two years ago, when a similar proposal came from the government, for the appointment of a special committee to investigate the causes of the rise in prices, one thing the government put forward in defence of the committee was that it would be a small committee of only sixteen members, including the chairman. It was to be kept small so that the task could be more expeditiously disposed of. But this committee of presumably fifty-six members is going to be hopelessly bogged down.

Mr. Martin: I think my hon. friend will want to know that it is not intended to have such a large committee. There will be twenty-eight members from this house and I understand about nine members from the other place.

Mr. Fleming: The minister has no control whatsoever over the number that will be appointed to the committee by the other place.

Mr. Knowles: Put them all on. They are on pension anyway.

Mr. Martin: You just wait and see.

Mr. Fleming: The resolution states that the other place is to be invited to appoint some of its members to serve on the proposed joint committee.

If it is an effective committee that the government want, why do not they follow the advice they gave the house two years ago and appoint a small compact committee? They said then that such a committee could proceed with the task much more expeditiously.

I come now to the third obvious shortcoming of this committee. It is given no power whatsoever to make so much as a single recommendation to the house.

Mr. Martin: It will have that power.

Mr. Fleming: It has not that power. There is not a word in this resolution that gives the committee the slightest power to make one recommendation to this house. That is a matter of first importance.

Mr. Martin: I rise to a point of order. My hon. friend is now interpreting the rules of the house. Under the rules of the house there is no doubt that a committee has power to make recommendations. My hon. friend

[Mr. Fleming.]

will remember the prices committee, and he knows that it made recommendations. I expect that this committee will be so inclined.

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker, I take direct issue with the statement made by the minister, and I shall have something to say about recommendations made on a previous occasion, and the way in which they were smuggled in after the committee and the house had been told that there was not such a power.

Sir, on this question of the power to make recommendations, let us go back to the instance of two years ago that the minister mentioned. On February 2, 1948, the house had under debate the government's motion for the appointment of a committee to inquire into the causes of the rise in prices, and we of the official opposition said, if we are going to have a committee let us have a committee that will really do a job. We asked that that committee be given power to make recommendations. And, sir, we brought in an amendment to the government's motion. We sought to add these words to the government's resolution, which will be found on page 760 of *Hansard* of February 2, 1948:

That as well as reporting its findings the committee shall from time to time make recommendations to the House of Commons, as in the opinion of the committee may be considered necessary to secure as far as possible fair and just returns to producers, employees and employers and fair and just practices in marketing and distribution that will safeguard the interests of consumers as well as of producers.

That amendment was ruled out of order, if you please. On objection taken by my hon. friend's leader of those days, they got the amendment ruled out of order, and when the ruling was challenged the house divided and of course my friend, and those associated with him, lined up in support of the ruling that eliminated the amendment as being out of order. If the minister will take the time to go back and read the debates leading up to the adoption of that resolution two years ago, he will see there that the prime minister of that day defended the motion lacking any provision for recommendations because he pictured the danger of recommendations, the danger that the committee would make recommendations at variance with government policy. It was that embarrassment that led the prime minister, and the government of which the minister is still a member, to oppose giving to that committee two years ago any power to make recommendations.

I submit to you, sir, that the reason we find no power to make recommendations provided for in the present resolution is the very same reason: that the government is seeking to handcuff the committee so that it will not bring in any recommendations which might run counter to government policy. Every