

Combines Investigation Act

has been almost unanimously revoked by the people of the United States.

If we are to follow the course which the government now plans to follow in abolishing resale price maintenance, we are going to turn the clock back fifty years. I believe that the committee which was set up to study resale price maintenance should be reconvened, and should give a thorough study to the fair trade laws of the United States to see if they could not be adapted to conditions here in Canada.

Having sat on the committee for approximately one month, it is my firm conviction that the legislation which the government now proposes is both hasty and ill-considered. I do not think any serious consideration was given to the views of those who opposed the abolition of price maintenance. I think it was obvious from the start that those who appeared before the committee opposing this present legislation were there only on sufferance. It was just eyewash that they were even permitted to attend, and it was obvious that whatever they had to say was not going to be taken seriously.

If we do not give this matter thorough investigation, we are going to get legislation which 150 million people in the United States have tried and discarded during a fifty-year trial period. Can we afford to ignore a lesson which has been learned by the most industrialized nation in the world today? I think the answer is an obvious and emphatic "no." Before embarking on this legislation, which I believe would be disastrous to the small shopkeeper, and which would not make any appreciable difference in the cost of living, as the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) has stated, we should give a thorough study to the United States fair trade laws which I believe are the answer to the problem facing us today.

They give the consumer and the retailer a better deal than they got under the abolition of resale price maintenance, and this has been proved by 150 million people in the United States. I would remind hon. members that the people of the United States are the same kind of people as we are. There is no appreciable difference between us; we like the same things; we buy the same things; we trade in the same way; we make our living in the same way; we enjoy ourselves in the same way.

If this government is going to refuse to give this matter a thorough study, it will simply be admitting that the legislation it is introducing is brought in for the political purpose of deluding the people of this country into thinking that the government is doing something to bring down the cost of living. It

will be doing something to take the people's minds off the steadily rising cost of living, about which the government has done nothing to date. I think that that kind of motive will not make the people of this country think very highly of what we do in this parliament.

I recommend to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Garson) that before proceeding with this legislation, he reconvene the committee so that a thorough study can be made of the practices and the experience of the United States in connection with this matter during a period of fifty years. After that is done the government can decide what action, if any, is justified in this matter.

Mr. M. J. Coldwell (Rosetown-Biggan): Mr. Speaker, since a subamendment has been moved perhaps if I should say a word at this stage it might shorten the discussion. I want to say immediately that what we were suggesting was not a fair trade law such as is in effect in several states of the union, but the setting up of a public board somewhat similar to the tariff board to which anyone could apply, retailer, manufacturer or consumer, to have his interest considered in public and if necessary protected. As the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mrs. Fairclough) has indicated, the fair trade law in the United States is really governed by agreements between manufacturers and retailers. The consumer's interest does not appear and is in no way protected other than in the manner in which she has indicated.

There is a great deal of dissatisfaction in the United States with their fair trade laws. I think it was Senator Tydings of Maryland who introduced a bill in the United States Senate to make this a federal matter. Sometime before he died, President Roosevelt denounced it in no uncertain terms, stating that it had operated against the consumer's interest and entirely in favour of the manufacturer.

There is one thing I want to say with regard to what the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Hees) said a few minutes ago. He complimented the hon. member for York South (Mr. Noseworthy) and said that the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis) had pressed for this legislation in the committee. I expect that is so. May I say that what I have moved is entirely in line with what my friend, the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis), suggested, and I may say that before he left he saw the amendment, knew what we were doing, and approved of it. My hon. friend said that we have changed our position. I would point out to him that on November 6, the day on which