

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: The advice of the law officers of the crown to me with respect to the law is, with all respect, the advice I must take.

Mr. McGEER: Yes, I agree.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: Then we agree on that. This bill is, from my point of view, a private bill. Any opinions I quote with respect to it are merely to place at the disposal of this committee and of the house such experience as the department has with respect to the particular matter. A year ago I indicated that opinion on the floor of the house, and the bills as a consequence came to this committee because of the experience which I there indicated. The best advice which I can get from one of the best officers of the government, in my opinion, is to the effect that this bill and the other one like it does have the effect of reducing the charges which the great bulk of borrowers of small loans from this company would have to pay. I am only in favour of the bill for the reason that it is a small step and I would not be in favour of it at all if it were a final step in that direction. I believe that this bill has the effect of lowering the charges for the great bulk of borrowers, not lowering it enough in my opinion, and that is why I again repeat that the committee if it does not want the Dominion to issue licences to this company at all, should say so, reach some decision. Continuing to talk of the things that have been talked over—

Mr. McGEER: Now, I asked you a question, Mr. Dunning, and you make another speech.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: I am imitating you.

Mr. McGEER: You talk about wasting time. I ask of you a plain straight question. Has the Department of Finance a ruling from the Department of Justice as to whether or not under the bill that we are amending the company can charge 14 per cent instead of 7 that appears on the face of the bill?

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: Well, it is no use asking me that question because my hon. friend knows that the premise he sets up is not the correct premise. 14 per cent is not the limit of what the company charges under the existing legislation. It goes away beyond that.

Mr. McGEER: As far as interest is concerned.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: It goes away beyond 14 per cent. We all know it does because in addition to the 7 per cent rate of discount which they have been charging there are other charges. What I am interested in is not whether you call it interest or whether you call it charges; I am interested in what the borrower pays, and he pays it all. Now, with respect to an expression of opinion from the Department of Justice. We have consulted the Department of Justice on many occasions with respect to this small loan business. Whether there is an opinion bearing on that point I cannot answer offhand.

Mr. McGEER: You see what I have in mind. I am not asking an idle question.

Hon. Mr. DUNNING: I am quite sure of that.

Mr. McGEER: What I would like to see is something which would maintain the parliamentary principle which has so long been established. The restricting of the rate of interest to all appears to be 7 per cent. Now, if under the act we are amending the Department of Justice has ruled that they can charge for interest 14 per cent, I should like to know it.

Mr. FINLAYSON: Perhaps I should give to Mr. McGeer the statement I made this morning. There have been no rulings of the Department of Justice on that point, and I wish to continue, no expression of opinion. The Department of Justice would not I believe care to give an opinion because the question is now before the courts. There have been conflicting decisions. One court, the Circuit