

Mr. JACKMAN: Certainly.

Hon. Mr. ABBOTT: The last one was, I think, the question of putting a time limit on the duration of this bill, which was first raised by Mr. Macdonnell on the second reading. As to that, I have very little to add to what I said in the early stages of the committee hearing, namely that I would be reluctant personally to see a time limit put on the duration of this bill. With Mr. Macdonnell I would hope it could be repealed just as soon as possible; and the limit which, after consideration and discussion, I feel would have to be put on might be misleading. I would not be prepared to consider or the government would not be prepared to consider, if we put a limit in, a limit of less than five years. I do not like putting a limit of five years in the bill. I would prefer to leave it free to parliament to repeal it, if circumstances permitted, before that time. I suggest that we allow the bill to stand as it now is with no limit. But if there is a strong feeling that a limit should be put on, I would be prepared to agree to a limit of the order of five years.

Mr. JACKMAN: You would be prepared to agree to that?

Hon. Mr. ABBOTT: Yes. What I would suggest is that it shall expire on such date after the 1st day of January, 1951, as may be fixed by resolution of the Senate and House of Commons, respectively. That would leave it free for anybody to introduce a resolution into the House. It would not have to be a government measure. I do not feel that I could go any further than that. If I may urge my own personal view, I think it might be better to leave it open for repeal before that time if circumstances are such that it could be done.

Mr. MACDONNELL: I will be very brief. I hold the opposite view very earnestly. I think as a matter of accident, it almost appears, the socialists are not here this morning. I feel very earnestly, more earnestly than I can possibly say, that in passing this bill we are passing a measure which has one of the characteristics of the socialist state. Do not let us fool ourselves. We have had very largely a socialist state during the war. That was inevitable. We have built up a very fine group of men who have exercised enormous power. They have exercised it very well. We have grown accustomed to it. We believe in them. As I said in this room before, they would be superhuman—indeed they would be unhuman—if they believed this power could suddenly be transferred over. I do not believe it could be suddenly transferred over. I am suggesting there is a very strong reason which has arisen since we began our discussion for the bill being for the duration of one year, and that is the passage of the American loan under which, as you will remember, there is provision that Great Britain has to free its exchanges, if I understand it correctly, within a year. I suggest that raises the point—I should have said on current account; Mr. Jackman corrects me. I suggest that is a very strong reason for your reconsidering our position at the end of the year; and I am all the stronger in that view, infinitely stronger in that view because of the principle of gradualism. The government has not been able to accept it. In other words, it is whole-hog or none. As I said when the matter came up in the House, to me there is a definite psychological difference between leaving this to be repealed when parliament decides to repeal it and, on the other hand, leaving it with the onus of justifying itself a year from now. The second point is a point I deeply regret in this thing, but I believe it is inevitable. I want to make this very clear. I believe that many members of the House, if they vote for this bill, will do so without really reflecting on the underlying principle behind it. I mean, freedom is a funny thing. It is a difficult thing to manage. It means that people have got to reflect on it and understand it. It can slip away. I was very interested in what Mr. Rasminsky said this morning. We have here a police state bill in many of its aspects.

The WITNESS: Excuse me, I did not say that.

Hon. Mr. ABBOTT: That was your word, Mr. Macdonnell.