Mr. FINO. The other point is on the question of the 18 percent national usury limits. There again, Government witnesses have indicated that they are not so sensitive on that phase of the bill.

Secretary WIRTZ. My position would be the same on that as on some other points—it is a pragmatic position. We need more information.

Mr. FINO. Mr. Secretary, you have expressed in connection with the garnishment ban a great concern about the evils of garnishment and yet the Federal Government, with the exception of Internal Revenue, does not permit garnishment.

Yet, although it does not permit garnishment of Federal employees' salaries it does fire employees if they have an accumulation of bills and get letters from creditors that the employee owes money.

Secretary WIRTZ. The Federal Government does?

Mr. FINO. We have seen that in the postal service. Some of these postal employees have come to me complaining their services had been terminated because they had an accumulation of bills. I was wondering about that.

Secretary WIRTZ. I would be opposed to it. I don't know on whose toes I am stepping but it is my greatly, deeply held conviction. It would not be my own sense of good management and it would not be the rule of the Department of Labor.

Mr. FINO. Getting back to garnishment, if we were to prohibit garnishment per se don't you think that would have a tremendous effect on our credit system in this country, in that retailers will not extend credit to anyone unless he pays for cash?

Secretary WIRTZ. I read the testimony of the witnesses last Friday before the committee and this is another area in which we are looking in connection with the study. Many have been assuming if we abolish garnishment, it would mean some reduction in the use of credit. This seems to me to follow almost automatically. Yet, I am frank to say that it is very hard to identify that effect when you look at the situation in Texas and Pennsylvania and Florida, which have abolished garnishment, and in several other States which have come so close to it that it has almost that effect.

You can't find the resultant effect on credit. It is a hard thing to measure. But I am willing to go along with the commonsense suggestion that if you tighten up on the use of this kind of practice it must have some effect on credit. It seems to me that plain.

I would be willing to accept that effect, but apparently it is less than I would have thought and perhaps by your question you seem to imply so. My answer—it could be a lot shorter—I think it must have some of that effect.

Mr. FINO. May I interrupt you, more particularly with the poor people? They will be the ones who will suffer the most because if you say retailer——

Secretary WIRTZ. Suffer the most?

Mr. FINO. Because they will not get the credit they are looking for.

Secretary WIRTZ. I don't think suffer. It seems to me they would be protected more. They really get themselves into a terrible situation.

Mr. FINO. When I say "suffer," they will not be able to make purchases the way they are making purchases now.

Secretary WIRTZ. I think that would be a blessing. Because when they put themselves dangerously in hock for a television set I don't believe they have done themselves a good turn.