

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

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● (1220)

[Translation]

COMBINES INVESTIGATION ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING DEFINITION, ADMINISTRATION AND OFFENCES

The House resumed, from Wednesday, March 27, consideration of the motion of Mr. Gray that Bill C-7 to amend the Combines Investigation Act and the Bank Act and to repeal an act to amend an act to amend the Combines Investigation Act and the Criminal Code, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on Bill C-7, which has been before us for a few days and which, I believe, has a great importance for Canadian consumers.

The bill before us has a bearing on many fields, of course, and its object seems to be to promote and encourage fair competition and above all to stem unfair competition. This bill will govern misleading and dishonest advertising, about which we often heard complaints. It seems that its object is to assure us and most especially the Canadian consumer that he will not be taken in, not be abused by misleading advertising.

Mr. Speaker, considering my interest for a type of dealers, as I spent several years in the food and especially the confectionery business, I thought I would say a few words on this bill to invite the minister responsible for it to give special attention to what we call independent merchants.

We know very well that those merchants, those corner grocery store owners, are often a bit squeezed by competition from big food chain stores. To the extent that competition from major food chains is fair, they are beyond reproach.

However, we know very well that the minister was made aware of this situation through briefs from various associations concerning giveaway sales usually called "loss leaders". I think it is important to remind the responsible minister how significant it is for these various groups to be able to make representations to the committee; I would like to comment mostly on that, and I will remind the minister of a discussion I had with him on the matter of how the complaints presented by these groups are instrumental in making it possible for the independent merchants to compete against chain stores.

We are well aware of the fact that the consumer is very often impressed by the price of some product which at first may seem very low. Moreover, we know that these stores advertise "loss leaders" a lot, and that the consumer will have to pay, sooner or later, because all these stores cannot, anymore than any other, sell at a loss. The independent merchant, the "corner store grocer" has real difficulties with chain stores which can put up such competition. I think the minister is well aware of many

Competition Bill

remarks made by these groups, and I hope that when the bill is referred to the committee, their spokesmen will present grievances and will show proof of what they have been saying as we know for the past few months.

In my opinion, it is important to remind the minister to ask those agencies to give us a better understanding of the situation as well as all the pertinent data so that we, members of parliament, may submit the necessary modifications to protect the independent businessmen who have the right, as everybody, to live in today's society.

Mr. Speaker, I will therefore be brief. I would like to comment on the risk of exploiting young athletes. I know that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) mentioned last week that an agreement had been reached between the National Hockey League and the World Hockey Association to give reasonable compensation to those agencies and club managers who made it possible for the young people to develop their skills.

I was very pleased to hear the recent statement made by the minister, because I know he has a very special interest for those young athletes who want to make their dream come true and practice their sport in a professional way.

The government must be on the alert and prevent any exploitation of young athletes whose participation in sport activities it is our responsibility to promote as much as possible.

Recently I heard the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Pelletier) talking about the extraordinary sports potential in our universities. I think it is the duty not solely of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Gray) or of the minister responsible for amateur sport to advocate grants or legislation to encourage young people to participate in sport activities of all kinds. If at all possible, we must strive for full use of the potential of our university students.

I would also like to say now a few words on the position of the government regarding football, a question which seems to interest a great many people in Canada. The minister's opposition to the coming of an American club in Canada is questionable and is now being discussed on a national basis.

Canadian football stands up well at present as regards competition. It is perfectly normal that a new league be set up and should no one be surprised about it. We had the advantage of having the Expos in Montreal, surely not a Canadian team, but it did encourage thousands of young people to become professionals and a little more skillful in this sport.

Could the American Football League bring about the same motivation? This is a question which I cannot answer now. To what extent would American football be able to "kill" Canadian football?

Perhaps the minister did not provide us with the necessary information in this regard to enable us to come to a conclusion. I had the opportunity of discussing this with a few Montreal sport broadcasters and they seemed very surprised to see the present attitude of the minister.

If the minister wants to give us the assurance that the arrival of an American football club in Canada would "kill" Canadian football, I am prepared to consider the