

Competition Tribunal Act

inflation rate since 1900. In effect there has been no change in the way we treat conspiracy in the courts since the year 1900.

I see my time is coming near an end, so I would like to point out very quickly some of the other shortcomings in the Bill. This Bill leaves out many of the protections to consumers that were introduced in other Bills that pass. Let me give some of the aspects of consumer competition legislation that have been left out of this Bill.

There has been no provision to permit class actions, as we see in competition legislation in other countries. There is no means of offering substitute actions. The question of interlocking directorates and management restrictions is not permitted to be brought forward under this legislation, so the influence directors have, by sitting on a large group of different companies and using their information to carry it back and forth and perhaps use their influence to fix prices, cannot be looked at under this Bill. The abuse of intellectual property is not a subject for investigation under this Bill. Neither are agreements to restrict imports or exports subject to this Bill. We are living in a very international kind of economy, yet agreements to restrict imports or exports are beyond the relevance of this Bill, as, indeed, are international conspiracies. There are no amendments to the aspect of price discrimination in this Bill. I see no amendments to cover predatory pricing in this Bill. It is essentially a polorical gesture designed to try and appease the public with the appearance of action, while leaving the structure of business totally unaffected. Bill C-91 is another Conservative Government triumph of symbolism over substance.

• (1200)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, the debate on Bill C-91, An Act to establish the Competition Tribunal, provides the House with an opportunity to reflect on a number of matters, which I will attempt to do in the next 10 minutes.

First, I want to talk about the whole question of productivity. We have heard much from the Conservatives, both in Opposition and in Government, about productivity and the problems in the Canadian economy being caused by decreased productivity. The argument that our economy had to be made more productive was generally associated with the view that the decrease in productivity was related to decreasing labour productivity. Very seldom did we hear Conservative Members talk about other aspects of the productivity debate.

Today's debate concerns a matter which directly relates to the productivity of the Canadian economy. Many economists have noticed in the last 10 years that the Canadian and American economies in particular, and the European economy to some extent, have seen a decline in productivity which is largely a result of the merger phenomenon that has been taking place.

Many of my colleagues in the New Democratic Party have already explained how the rash of mergers and takeovers do

not increase employment, and the point has not been made sufficiently clear that these mergers also have an effect on the over-all nature of economic activity. In fact, rather than stimulating new activity and producing new wealth, during the last 10 years the capitalists in this country have been farming the corporate system in such a way that ours has become a paper economy in many respects. The capitalists have been planning how to make money through mergers and utilizing the tax system, rather than through real productivity. Our economy is not nearly as productive as many of those in the corporate sector would like us to believe. They are looking to blame others for the lack of productivity in our economy when, in fact, much of the blame lies with those in the corporate sector who are trying to find the easy way to legally increase their profits in non-productive ways.

Our Party does not believe that this is a good Bill. The debate on this Bill basically centres around the tension between the traditional poles of the capitalist economy; irrational competition on the one hand and monopoly on the other. Neither of these tend to be good for the ordinary citizen. The trend in this country has been toward the pole of the corporate monopoly, and I was shocked to hear that some nine families now control 50 per cent of the Toronto Stock Exchange. Certainly this does not reflect the spirit of free enterprise and rugged individualism, but rather a move toward a new feudalism in this country where a handful of families can make economic decisions which affect all Canadians. If that is called democracy, I must ask Members opposite just what they mean by democracy.

The New Democratic Party believes that democracy is more than just electoral politics. It is a question of social and economic democracy. When our country can allow itself to be in a position that nine families control over 50 per cent of the Toronto Stock Exchange, it can hardly call itself democratic in any comprehensive sense of the word.

I believe that we are debating the future of democracy in this country. When so much power is concentrated in the hands of so few people our function in Parliament as the appearance of democracy becomes increasingly irrelevant, as decisions that affect the economic future of this country are being made elsewhere with no accountability to the well-being of Canadians, or to the Government for that matter.

Previous Liberal Governments and the present Conservative Government have refused to stand up to the beast and make the capitalist economy accountable to the people of Canada. The debate today is essentially whether or not we will ever have a Government that is willing to make the capitalists accountable for those decisions.

We have often heard Members opposite talk about the notion that big Government reduces accountability for the decisions which affect Canadians in their daily lives. While we all must be concerned about big Government, it should not be at the expense of concern for other equally important decisions that are taken without any accountability. At least one can say about Government, however big and bureaucratic, that there is