

Private Bills

you have ten men running around doing what one man can do, then it seems to me that comparative costs will be somewhere in the neighbourhood of the power of ten. I do not see how this leads in any meaningful way to a reduction of costs or the provision of better protection for the Canadian public or, for that matter, the citizens of any other country.

• (5:10 p.m.)

This is not the only instance of duplication. Constantly, one company after another is vying for the consumers' dollars, and we are told that this will lead to lower prices. I do not think this is the result. When companies merge we are told it is an attempt to improve efficiency. I cannot see how one can contend on the one hand that rationalization brings about efficiency, and on the other hand that extra competition brings about efficiency. This is a contradiction in terms. You cannot have it both ways. It seems to me it has to be either one or the other.

I should like to give an example of a related activity that has a great number of outlets and different brand names, namely, the gasoline industry. A great number of companies seem to feel that they should direct their best efforts to putting a gas station on every street corner in the country. This is done under the guise of competition of some sort. I think most of us here have noted that, with the exception of a few cut-rate places, most of the gas companies seem to arrive at precisely the same price for their products. As a matter of fact, it has been suggested that perhaps there really is not very much difference between their products. However, I think that marginal differences and services tend to be overemphasized in this field, as they do in the insurance field.

Another example of how the public is being misled is in the operation of the deodorant market. People seem to feel that if they buy a particular kind of deodorant they can come up smelling like a rose—no personal pun intended. There is an endless duplication of various types of deodorants on the market, and this seems to spur competition. However, I am not certain that it accomplishes much more than that, unless it is to line the pockets of the manufacturers of such commodities. Soaps are another example. Many—

Mr. Wahn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would question whether the hon. member's remarks are directed to this bill, which relates to an insurance company. I realize he may be having difficulty in saying anything that has not been said before, but neverthe-

less we are very much interested in hearing remarks that are directed toward this particular subject matter. I submit that the hon. member's remarks about soap and deodorants are hardly relevant to the field of insurance, this type of insurance at any rate.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member for St. Paul's (Mr. Wahn) that perhaps I did indulge in a mild excursion, but I felt it was necessary to do so in order to clear the air, as it were. I also felt that perhaps this was a collateral example of the kind of thing that is happening in many other industries. However, let me assure the hon. member that I will desist from following this line because I certainly do not want to make him uncomfortable. I think the hon. member is entitled to hear a discussion of the merits of the particular bill he is sponsoring and therefore I will get right to the point.

What I am really trying to say is that it is very difficult in this kind of industry to justify another intrusion by a foreign-owned firm into the Canadian market on the ground that it is going to bring about better service to the insurance purchasing public of Canada. I have tried to make the point that rather than having too few insurance companies we already have too many, that this multiplicity of companies has not contributed anything in terms of efficiency of operation or reduced cost to the insurance buying public.

Instead of our approving this type of bill in this house, I am certain that Canadians would be more interested in the results of some kind of study along the lines of the Hall commission report on medicare so as to see whether or not we really do need further extensions in the general insurance field in this country. It seems to me we are always being told we do not have money to build homes, that we do not have money for schools, or that we do not have money for many of the essential services that we require in this country. Yet insurance companies are able to construct monstrous edifices to house their continually expanding office forces which, in my view, do little more than chase paper.

If such a committee of inquiry were struck to look into this field, it would probably come to the conclusion that some sort of public ownership of the general insurance field, as in the case, for instance, of the automobile insurance field in Saskatchewan, would enhance service to Canadians. This service is required. I think insurance companies tend to grow fat on the real or imagined suffering of people generally, and particularly from their need for security.

[Mr. Rose.]