

That amendment did not carry in the committee, not because it was defeated, but rather because one Conservative member brought to the attention of the Chairman that it was not in order. The minister was quite clear, when it was ruled out of order, in suggesting that if this House were to rule it in order he would be prepared to accept it. As we all know, Mr. Speaker has ruled that this amendment is in order, so it has the support of the minister.

I would be remiss if I did not point out that we have had occasions in the past in this country when large companies have been found guilty of conspiracy and the fines which were assessed against them were nothing more than licences for them to continue these practices. I am looking specifically at a report from the director of investigation and research of the Combines Investigation Act for the year ended March 31, 1974. The one case which is very prominent in this little booklet, which I got from the minister, incidentally, refers to the situation in respect of the cement companies in British Columbia.

This case arose out of an inquiry by the director into the sale and supply of cement and ready-mixed concrete in British Columbia. The evidence was referred to the Attorney General of Canada pursuant to Section 15 of the act and charges were laid on February 19, 1974, in the Supreme Court of British Columbia. The accused companies pleaded guilty on March 11 and they were fined as follows: On the first conspiracy—cement—Ocean Construction Supplies Limited; \$125,000; Lafarge Canada Ltd., \$100,000; and Canada Cement Lafarge Ltd., \$25,000. In the second conspiracy—ready-mixed concrete—the companies and fines were, Ocean Construction Supplies Limited, \$65,000; Deeks-Lafarge Ltd., \$40,000; Lafarge Concrete Ltd., \$25,000; and Metro Concrete Ltd., \$7,000.

● (2130)

The third conspiracy involved ready-mixed concrete. Ocean Construction Supplies Limited was fined \$30,000. Butler Brothers Supplies Limited was fined \$15,000. Obviously these fines were nothing more than licences.

Then we have the matter of a very common charge that was laid against the beer and tavern keepers of Quebec City, who were accused of conspiring to set prices for beer in Quebec City. On December 3, 1973, the accused pleaded guilty and were fined \$350. One can imagine how long that matter continued before the situation was discovered. This fine in effect becomes nothing more than a licence to operate in that manner.

We have situations in which companies once fined went back and did exactly the same thing. We have the case now of the sugar cartels in this country which were convicted for conspiring to set prices. Now we find that they are back again before the courts for exactly the same offence. Very shortly the courts of this country will be hearing the latest in the series of the dredging cases concerning the corporations which have involved themselves in dredging. When this case comes to trial it would be interesting if we had this kind of amendment containing this type of fine and imprisonment so that the offence could be assessed in relation to the seriousness of the crime.

Combines Investigation Act

I have told the minister that we have a provincial prison in our area that has closed down and that the people of Nickel Belt would be quite prepared to accept all these white collar criminals if they were sent there, where we could find useful work for them in the community.

It seems to me that an amendment of this kind would certainly put some teeth into the legislation. I have heard the lobbyist from Edmonton West for the corporate sector. I have heard him in committee. Indeed this is the line this corporate body has taken in this House since the first anti-combines legislation was presented back in 1889. I realize the hon. gentleman is not that old, but when the first anti-combines legislation was introduced the same lobbyists were making the arguments that are being made today. Perhaps they made the country strong but they made the poor poorer and rich richer.

Now, Madam Speaker, it is very obvious that this kind of fine and this kind of punishment contained in this amendment which I have introduced would do much to improve the anti-combines legislation in respect of offering protection to the consumers of Canada.

I am often amazed at how tough our courts can be in respect of those who do not have the money to purchase the services of the fancy Dan smart lawyers who can stand up and defend people in the courts. I have been amazed by the two kinds of justice systems we have in this country, one for the rich and one for the poor. This is most obvious in cases involving these corporations which break the law and fleece the public. Indeed it is not out of line for me to say that the same oil companies on which this government has been depending for its facts and figures, these American multinational oil companies, are the same companies which have now been accused of collusion in bilking the American public. It is the same system in both countries which produces this type of situation. It is the free enterprise system. It is a system in which there is freedom for those who have money to take advantage of those who do not have money.

It may not be proper for an opposition party to take crumbs from the minister's table when we should be sharing the meal, but it seems to me that, while I do not agree with this legislation, this amendment would certainly go a long way toward improving what is very much window dressing legislation proposed by the minister. I urge members of the House to support this amendment, which is a fair and honest one.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I should like to deal very briefly with the motion introduced by the hon. member and indicate my willingness in principle to accept his motion, provided I may introduce an amendment which will result in eliminating the penalty under section 32 of the act. When he introduced his motion, the hon. member unfortunately forgot to strike out the lines which mention the penalty. I should like to move therefore:

[*English*]

That the motion of the hon. member be amended by striking out all the words following the words 'Clause 14' and by substituting the following therefore:

'(a) by striking out line 32 on page 23 thereof and substituting the following: