

Competition Tribunal Act

and nurture not only an economic market-place but a democratic market-place? These are the concerns which we raise on behalf of the Opposition. We will pursue them as diligently as we can.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there questions or comments? The Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour).

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, the Party of the Hon. Member was in office for 23 years but for seven months before the election of September, 1984. What did his Party do during that time? Does he have no sense of humility when he gets up now and lectures us with respect to the deficiencies of our Bill?

● (1600)

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) is enjoying his newfound publicity in the *Edmonton Journal* and therefore feels emboldened enough to rise to his feet. I would remind him that if he had been a Member of the House during those times, he would realize that one of the major reasons three different attempts to bring in stronger competition laws did not work was the major filibustering on the part of his Party. The kind of parliamentary hijacking that went on time after time prevented that legislation from passing because the Tories were working in concert with their friends in big business.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, let me put the same question to the Hon. Member. I will not go back to Mackenzie King and the more than 50 years of the last 65 years in which Liberals ran the country. However, the Liberals formed the Government from 1962 to 1984. They did ask the Economic Council to study the question. The Economic Council made recommendations and at least three times the Liberal Government brought in draft legislation which was not very good. Now that the Hon. Member is in opposition, he is making the same criticisms of this Bill which we made of the Liberal Bill.

The Liberal Government had the same power to impose closure as this Government has and the Liberal Government did use its power to impose closure although not as often as the Conservatives. If the Liberals had really wanted legislation passed, they could have had it passed. I suggest to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) that the reason they did not pass the legislation was that the business community really did not want good anti-competition legislation and the Liberals were not prepared to take issue with their financial supporters. That is why the legislation did not pass and that is why the Hon. Member is now making the kind of speech that he should have made when he was a cabinet Minister of the Liberal Government.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, first I would remind the Hon. Member that my oath of the Privy Council prevents me from indicating what kind of speeches I made as a member of the Cabinet regarding these matters, but I would say that on this issue, I have certainly been pretty consistent.

I would say to the Hon. Member that his rewriting and interpretation of history is not quite accurate. I would only point to the last major effort to bring in substantial amendments to the Combines Investigation Act in 1983-84, an effort which was prevented by the bell-ringing tactics of the opposition Parties with which I suppose his Party was in concert. The bell ringing was a major frustration in the implementation of that Bill. We had brought in the amendments and if we had had the kind of co-operation that they are now proposing, we would have had a new competition Bill a full two and a half years ago. We would not need to ask for retroactivity from a Minister who is obviously not prepared to give it. We would have been able to implement and activate many of the measures that now exist. We are saying that it is now time for strengthened measures, not the kind of weakened measures that are in this Bill.

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on what I feel is the somewhat selective memory of the Hon. Member with respect to the facts as they have occurred over the last few years. The Hon. Member was a Member of the House and a Minister of the Crown for many, many years. He was a Minister of the Crown back in 1976 at the time when a court decision in the K.C. Irving oil case literally put an end to the effectiveness of the present legislation that was put in place many years ago, the Combines Investigation Act. After that, in 1977, the Government introduced Bill C-42. Later in 1977, the Government introduced another Bill, namely, Bill C-13. In 1984, it introduced a further Bill, namely, Bill C-29. All those Bills were aimed at amending and trying to make more effective this particular legislation.

The Hon. Member has talked about the question of the Government's commitment to try to make this thing work. Where was the commitment of the Government of which he was a part at that time? What is the official policy of his Party at the moment with respect to combines and competition legislation? Is it the official policy of his Party to make sure that competition is effective and in place and that there is legislation to allow it, and is it also the position of his Party that we ought to make sure that there is no concentration of power whatsoever in Canada?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, again we are dealing with the interesting question of whose history is more accurate. I would only amend the Hon. Member's comment for the sake of the record. In 1976, I did not have the pleasure of serving in this House. It was only a gleam in my eye. At the time, I was serving the interests of the people of Manitoba in the Manitoba Legislature, but my views on this particular issue were as consistent then as they are now.

I would remind the Hon. Member that he might wish to go back to his history books to learn that in 1976, the then Liberal Government did bring in a series of amendments to the Combines Investigation Act in response to those conditions. Once that Bill was passed, we needed some time to look at the impact of it but were prevented from doing so by the election