

Oral Questions

to put people who save only through registered retirement plans and people who save only through registered retirement savings plans on the same basis. It is a very equitable piece of legislation. I am sure that the hon. member, when he sees it, will agree with it.

The other part of the legislation which the hon. member is ignoring when he makes that comment is that this legislation is going to shut down a large number of loopholes that have crept in over the years to allow a degree of retirement savings over and above the limitations that were intended to be. The net result of this is that the closing of the loopholes will pay for the equitable elements that will put all people who are saving for retirement on the same basis.

It is good legislation. It is equitable legislation. It is legislation which closes down loopholes.

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COMPETITION ACT

Hon. Roger C. Simmons (Burin—St. George's): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Acting Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It is about the Imperial-*Texaco* deal.

He will know that the former director of the competition bureau took the rare step of referring this deal to the tribunal. The tribunal chairperson in her decision criticized the former director for being "highly presumptuous if not arrogant" in his handling of the *Texaco* deal.

Does the minister share the assessment of the chairperson of that tribunal? How do we as Canadians know that the same mishandling of those deals has not occurred in all the other cases which have not been referred to the tribunal?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Cal Goldman who took over as head of the competition bureau after the passage of the new Competition Act, after many abortive attempts by the previous government, did an exemplary job of handling that. I find it regrettable that the hon. member would stand up and slander his reputation in that manner.

In terms of the Imperial-*Texaco* decision, the head of the tribunal, Justice Reid, made certain recommendations. The current head of the competition bureau, Mr.

Wetston, said he was looking at them and making accommodations. I understand they will be appearing, I think perhaps even tomorrow, with the restructured deal. I think we ought to let that process which is an excellent process that works well and has been working well continue to its conclusion.

• (1510)

Mr. Simmons: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister, although I must say the first part of his answer was sufficiently kinky that it probably qualifies for FBDB funding.

I am quoting to him not my words but the words of the chairperson of the tribunal. If anybody is slanderous in his calumny terms it is her, not me.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Simmons: Of course the truth is neither of us is being slanderous, only the minister.

The track record of this competition bureau in protecting Canadians, I think the minister will agree, has been somewhat less than brilliant. In short, it has been an unmitigated disaster. The former director whom he defends referred only six cases to the tribunal. Of course the whole process, as we can see, is completely flawed and is a farce.

I ask the minister: Does he not agree that the time has now come to take a new look at that act in the interest of protecting Canadians and ensuring that all such deals are automatically referred to the tribunal?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member needs a new joke writer.

I find that a peculiar measure. He said that because only six cases have been referred to the tribunal this is axiomatic proof that the act is a failure and the public is not being protected. I do not understand that logic.

Mr. Simmons: What about air fares?

Mr. Andre: I think if the hon. member keeps his mouth shut and his ears open for a minute, he will appreciate how silly that argument is.

All the experts I have been reading from the business community, from the independent economic think-tanks and so on have acknowledged that the competition situation in Canada, the competition bureau under the new Competition Act, is a fantastic improvement over anything that preceded it, especially any of the abortive