

Competition Tribunal Act

still paying more than American motorists. We are told by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that this is because the oil takes a while to work its way through the system. In other words, it takes time to move the crude oil from the West to the East through the pipelines. Do Americans have shorter pipelines for the same distances? The Canadian people are not crazy. They see that there is this difference in prices.

The difference in prices exists because we cannot have a free market energy policy without a free market. There is insufficient competition. There are occasional bursts of competition, like the gasoline wars in Toronto, but the problem is that there are four major companies which control the market. They are simply not passing on the savings and they are making money in the retailing and refining sectors. It is not even the gas station operators who are benefiting from the increased margin, but the retailers.

I hope this amendment will help provide for an agency that will determine whether or not there is competition in the market-place. It is amazing that I should have to make a Conservative argument for free competition, but if Conservative Members are not going to make this argument and are not going to accept the amendment the least they can do is accept a competitive system if there is to be a competitive energy policy. That is completely logical. That is my argument in favour of this particular amendment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, this issue was raised by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) on a number of occasions before the legislative committee. There has been a great deal of discussion on this matter and we discussed it in the House at second reading stage.

As I have indicated to the Hon. Member, the proposed competition Act deals very specifically with conglomerate mergers to the extent that they raise competition issues. If there is any other aspect of conglomerate mergers which the House believes should be addressed through legislation, such as concentration of individual ownership or corporate assets control of financial institutions by non-financial corporations, they should be dealt with in the context of other appropriate legislation.

I remind Hon. Members that we are dealing with competition legislation and we are prepared to look at anything which lessens competition. That is why we have set up a tribunal and that is why many of these concerns expressed by members of the Opposition will have a chance to be aired before a tribunal. That never happened before. That is why there is a general consensus among organizations and individuals that this competition legislation is long overdue. However, this amendment is not the way to address the situation. Therefore, I recommend that the Hon. Member's motion be defeated.

Mr. John Parry (Kenora—Rainy River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise to support my colleague's amendment to Bill C-91 because I believe it addresses one of the major problems in corporate Canada, a problem that the Bill does not address

at this particular time. That problem is the reality of corporate concentration.

When looking at the history of attempts to regulate corporate concentration, and particularly to regulate the rightly perceived ill effects of corporate concentration, there has been excessive attention in the regulations to the formal rather than the real aspects. Because there can be such a variance between the formal appearance of corporate concentration and the actual reality of it, I believe is appropriate to include discretionary powers in the hands of the director, and that is what this amendment is attempting to do.

There has been no calculus developed which can effectively measure and define the nature of corporate concentration of power. We see the way corporate power is concentrated in Canada today. My hon. colleague spoke of the 9 or 10 families involved. We see the way in which interlocking boards of directors have shareholding charts that cover interlocking companies, each holding the other's shares. We see the degree to which the influence of a single individual, a single family or a single holding company can permeate an entire industry and indeed spread horizontally into a number of industries. We see the way in which non-financial, financial, industrial and commercial holdings can be mixed in a corporate network or intercorporate structure. After seeing all that, I believe that any Canadian who is concerned about the way in which economic power is exercised should support a measure which provides for some discretion in the hands of the Government.

The key words are concern about the exercise of economic power. We are talking about the regulation of economic power? PAGE 13993 by the Government power. Indeed, I am sure that Progressive Conservative Members would argue very strongly that there must be limits on the exercise of Government power over the economic power of the country. That is not a position that I would find untenable on ideological grounds. But I must caution the Government that in rejecting this amendment it will not only be fulfilling part of its ideological agenda but will essentially be limiting the effect of Bill C-91 on the formal basis of corporate concentration rather than assessing and addressing the reality of corporate concentration, and the reality of the exercise of economic power through intercorporate, corporate, conglomerate, holding company and *Zaibatsu*, to use the Japanese term, practices.

• (1210)

My colleagues, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North, (Mr. Orlikow) and the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell), made some very telling arguments and gave some very good examples of the way in which corporate power is concentrated in Canada. Rather than go into the specifics, as they did, I should like to caution the House and lay down some of the ways in which, if the amendment is rejected, companies will be able to treat Bill C-91 with the sort of high disdain and gay abandon they have always been able to address the Government's somewhat emasculated predecessors.