

Supply—Justice

length. His remarks were well-founded and, I thought, very much to the point. There is a case to be made for Mr. Spencer, and I think the hon. member for Royal did it as well as anyone.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I want to speak particularly about the estimates of the department in relation to the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission and the combines investigation branch. I would not want the civil servants who worked so hard to prepare the annual reports of the Restrictive Trade Practice Commission and who put in their share of the work which goes into the annual report of the Department of Justice to feel that no one reads these reports.

There have not been too many speeches in this house on the question of combines investigation. The hon. member for Peace River referred to them briefly the other day, and I have spoken on the matter a number of times. I spoke in December of 1963, and on looking at the speech just recently I found I could really make the same speech tonight, because practically nothing has happened in the meantime.

I had another speech ready in November of 1964, but I did not give it because during the Justice estimates for that year the hon. member for Yukon got the discussion going in a different direction and the question did not seem appropriate at the time.

An hon. Member: Which direction was that?

Mr. Prittie: It had to do with skating rinks in Montreal, and all that sort of thing.

As I said, Mr. Chairman, very little has changed since this government came to power as far as combines investigation is concerned. I freely admit that my speech in 1963 was largely a review of a book published by two academics, Thorburn and Rosenbluth, entitled "Canadian Anti-Combines Administration, 1952-60". These two professors pointed out certain weaknesses in our combines legislation at that time and also in the administration of the act. In the meantime there has been no change made in the legislation.

However, in one respect there has been a change. These two professors criticized the amount of money being budgeted for combines investigation at that time, and I am pleased to say that there has been an increase over the last two years in money allocated for combines investigation work. In 1964-65 the two branches combined—the commission,

and the office of investigation and research—had a budget of \$729,000. In 1965-66 this was increased to \$837,000; and I see the estimates for 1966-67 call for an amount of \$903,200. So there is some improvement in that field in the budgetary aspect.

I have followed the ads which have been put out by the Civil Service Commission. There have been a number published in the past year and a half asking for personnel. I should like to hear from the minister at some time on the question of personnel and whether these branches are getting adequate staff. In the report of the Director of Investigation and Research for the year ending March 31, 1965, I notice this comment appearing at page 72:

The shortage of staff for specific investigations has imposed an important limitation on the development of research studies. Efforts have been made to recruit senior research personnel but up to the present, these efforts have not succeeded in the appointment of qualified persons. In view of the difficulty experienced in recruiting senior research staff for career posts in the Branch, attention is being given to the possibility of having qualified research scholars in the universities accept temporary assignments to undertake particular research projects.

At some time I should like the minister responsible to disclose how successful the department has been in recruiting senior research personnel as well as more junior personnel to carry out investigation work.

The deficiencies in the law relating to mergers, Mr. Chairman, have been evident for many years. They were pointed up in 1960 in the decisions in the Canadian Breweries case and in the British Columbia Sugar Refineries case in the same year. The staff recognizes this problem and the weakness in the law relating to mergers. Successive ministers of justice have said they recognize the problems, but in nearly six years no legislation has been brought forward to change the law. I should like to ask why this is so and to hear an explanation of what is being done in this regard.

I notice again at page 18 of the report of the Director of Investigation and Research for the year ended March 31, 1965, a quotation from the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission. They said:

—It is our hope that in the near future the questions raised by these (Canadian Breweries and Western Sugar) decisions will be reviewed by appellate tribunals, more particularly by the Supreme Court of Canada, so that they may be definitely settled.

I should like to hear what is being done in the way of research or draft legislation to strengthen the merger provisions in our law.