

*Competition Tribunal Act*

fact that there is no reference at all, in whatever form, to the so-called "lost leader" seems to be quite an oversight.

Another major oversight that was emphasized by a number of my colleagues is the fact that appointments are left to the discretion of the Government. Those appointments are not subject to the recently introduced mechanism designed to monitor or oversee them. In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, there is every reason to believe, in view especially of this Government's record, that party hacks will be favoured in that process, and, of course, they will be selected from private enterprise which will then have the responsibility of administering the Act. This looks ominous to me, and I am extremely concerned.

Mr. Speaker, it also seems obvious, looking at this legislation, that very large corporations will be clearly favoured as against the small ones.

As I have already explained, big corporations have substantial capital and they are always willing to inject millions of dollars, and even tens of millions of dollars in the system to block the opposition of small groups of consumers or other people who would like to express their disapproval. These corporations do so by investing either in their operation or in public relations so that, eventually, they must always win over those who are not as able to express themselves because they do not have the same resources.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I believe that when we try to correct the situation, we should make it easier for third parties and all those who defend the interests of consumers to present a united front when they make a claim of some kind. This is another weakness which I find completely unacceptable. If the Government really wanted to do something practical and reasonable about this major concern which has been discussed for decades, I think that it would be very simple to make the necessary changes quickly. We would then be able to give quick passage to the Bill as it would be in the best interests of consumers.

For the moment, after looking at Bill C-91, I have the feeling that the dice are definitely loaded in favour of big business and, naturally, to the disadvantage of the consumer. I think that we must try to bring back some balance to protect adequately the interests of consumers, and I trust that this will be done soon when further amendments are introduced.

[English]

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have an opportunity to take part in this debate. I wish I had been able to speak sooner so I might have had more time. I would like to warn my good friends on the Government side that I intend to do a little bit of philosophizing in the name of and for the welfare and good order of the so-called free enterprise system. That might surprise Hon. Members but that is my intent.

• (1620)

The motion before us is to provide for a six-month hoist. The matter could be dealt with if the Government would agree to take this Bill back to the drawing board. I think the Bill deserves some redrafting and reconsideration by the Government, if for no other reason than to get it passed much more quickly.

All of us agree that we have been waiting a long time for new and updated competition legislation. However, as long as the legislation is built on the traditional theory of free enterprise and market forces, then we have the same problem we have had for the last many years.

Free enterprise is great in theory. I suppose one could say the same thing for the positions of Karl Marx and Adolf Hitler. They are great in theory.

**Mr. Andre:** I don't think so. I wouldn't say that.

**Mr. Benjamin:** However, in practice—I would say to my hon. friend from Calgary that one of the things that drives people to totalitarianism on the left or the right is the implementation of the free enterprise theory in practice. People are driven to those sorts of extremes.

**Mr. Andre:** Revolutions and armed forces.

**Mr. Benjamin:** My colleagues and I are trying to promote a revolution at the ballot boxes, not at the end of a bayonet.

What underlies the theory of free enterprise and free market forces is the maximization of profit. In other words, Mr. Speaker, in a free enterprise system you do anything you have to do to make a buck, no matter who it hurts, whether it is the consumers or your own country.

I would like to say at the outset that members of the New Democratic Party are not opposed to making a profit. We never have been. We are for real competitive profit making in the private sector. We are against profit taking in the absence of real enterprise. To me, Sir, free enterprise means trying to do your best to make a conscionable profit based on the quality, durability, price, service and efficiency provided by whatever product is being sold.

The main problem with the theory of free enterprise and free market forces which needs to be considered over the next six months is that it is an invitation, as if one were needed, to greed, selfishness and the asking of "what's in it for me?" Tommy Douglas, who Members on all sides of the House have extolled at length in the House and all over the country, said many times many years ago that the trouble with free enterprise is that too much of it is neither free nor enterprising.

Mergers and takeovers are valid only if they pool resources and research, resulting in the maximum use of technology and efficiency which allows not only for a conscionable profit but provides the maximum benefit to the employees and consumers of that industry. Surely mergers and takeovers are invalid if, as and when they reduce competition, obtain market control over