

Competition Tribunal Act

If nothing comes out of Recommendation 58 I will ask the Hon. Member for York-Scarborough (Mr. McCrossan) and the chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn), to take the same approach with respect to these two companies because they are not financial institutions.

I am saying to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and to the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) that we want fairness. If indeed these deals are now being blocked under some kind of principle, considering that nothing was done a few months back to stop a similar operation which was much more significant since it involved the merger of two companies, two trust companies, with the result that Canada Trust is now among the largest Canadian trust companies, if not the largest, well if the first deal was not blocked I fail to see why this one should be.

I would humbly suggest that in the case of these two companies, Genstar or Imasco, both have been behaving as good corporate citizens in this country. I do not see why the Genstar deal should be okayed and the Imasco deal rejected. That would amount to outright injustice. Nor do I see why the Conservatives should be inconsistent if the law is enforced and if they are quite prepared to fight for that law and that principle. They simply must not change the rules in the middle of the game; having allowed Genstar to merge Canada Permanent with Canada Trust there is no way they can now prevent Imasco from doing the same thing, because the situation is similar in terms of these deals.

If the law is enforced, I shall be in complete agreement with Recommendation 58. However, if it is not enforced, I would have to say that there has been a lot of hypocrisy in some of the activities we have witnessed and the comments we have heard.

This is why I say that there must be some sense of equity. On the whole issue of the concentration of power, we must not act too quickly either, because we could prevent other smaller groups from organizing to compete with the larger groups, especially if the Government does not have the courage to dismantle these larger groups. I am thinking of much smaller groups which must become organized to provide effective competition for the consumers. I humbly submit that if the present situation is maintained and if the Genstar deal made last November and finalized in January is not changed and if the Imasco deal is blocked, there will be a basic inequity which could have been avoided if the Government had shown its colours as soon as the Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs made this unanimous recommendation.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, I come back to what I was saying at the beginning, namely, that it is important to have legislation to limit concentration, that this legislation must have teeth and that we must ensure that there is a competitive capacity in our Canadian system to protect consumers and free enterprise; but to meet this objective, we must act fairly and equitably so

that legal entities from whatever region of Canada will be treated fairly and equitably.

• (1130)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are certainly not ready for the question. I wonder why government Members are so anxious to rush this Bill through the House, rather than giving it full and adequate debate.

The legislation now before the House, Bill C-91, purports to be competition legislation. Obviously, with its level of corporate concentration, Canada requires effective competition legislation. My colleague who spoke a few minutes ago mentioned that nine families control the vast majority of the companies on the Canadian stock exchange. That gives Canada an image similar to that of a banana republic. Corporate concentration is a real problem in the country and must be dealt with effectively.

We must ask why the Government is so anxious to rush this legislation through. Is it afraid to have the provisions of the legislation examined? Is it afraid of having an evaluation of what this legislation is capable of accomplishing? We oppose this legislation because it is weak. It is weak legislation which is meant to deal with a very difficult situation.

We know that the Government was faced with a challenge when it sought to introduce competition legislation. Over the last couple of decades the Liberals have played around with attempts to draft competition legislation. They always hesitated to bring such legislation before the House because they knew that once they drafted effective legislation they would run into opposition from the corporate community. Therefore, they danced around the issue rather than coming to grips with it.

We are not surprised that the Conservatives have not dealt with this matter effectively, because the problem of concentration of corporate economic power in the country is a very difficult one. Rather than dancing around the issue the Conservatives chose to water down their solution. Thin gruel is no answer, Mr. Speaker. We need effective legislation.

While this legislation purports to deal with monopoly, merger, and conspiracy, it is riddled with loopholes. One of the biggest loopholes in this legislation is a clause which refers to mergers which will lessen competition substantially. Through this loophole the Government can allow continued concentration of corporate economic power. The Government can say that it has legislation to assure competition, but if the economic activities result in the substantial lessening of competition, it has gone too far and will not be allowed.