

*Competition Tribunal Act*

quite worthy. However, I do not feel that within the context of a country so large and so diverse as Canada that competition policy can be allowed to function on the same level as it would function in a geographically small country such as Japan. It is a unitary state which has been hallmarked over the last 60 years by a singleness of purpose, which does not exist in Canada and which I do not think we should necessarily be promoting.

For example, Japanese companies look toward providing lifetime employment for their employees. Japanese business ethics and business practice, while very effective in that country, and no doubt harmonious with its cultural values and institutions, will be totally alien to Canadians in our context and our cultures.

We see that there have been incentives offered to staff people in these Canadian conglomerates to encourage others to deal with other companies within their conglomerate. We see the very real linkage between the goods and service economy and between the financial economy of intermediaries, of arbitragists, of lenders and borrowers, which enables the conglomerate that controls financial institutions to exercise enormous power that is largely unfettered in Canada at the present time. This is known as self-dealing. It is the system whereby the financial institution loses its independence, its arm's length relationship with its customers, and is bent toward furthering the finance or corporate goals of the parent.

That was very clearly the case in the instances of a Toronto financier and his trust companies, Seaway, Greymac, and Crown Trust. It is something which, without effective competition legislation to regulate conglomerate mergers, would always stand as a temptation to the people who exercise the controlling interest in the resulting multi-industry and mixed-industry conglomerates.

The record of corporate concentration in Canada is sad, since there has been no commitment to the lifetime employment system which makes it such a practical institution in, for example, Japan. Rather, we have seen the reverse. We have seen that the commitment is toward the reduction of employment. The commitment is toward eliminating employment which pays a respectable wage and replacing it with low-wage employment, for example, in the case of Dominion Stores. These are not the consequences that members of the New Democratic Party want to see from a revision of our competition policy.

There is other opposition to this measure as well. Perhaps we should be glad that there can still be opposition in the newspapers. After all, I point out that there is very little to prevent any conglomerate now having gobbled up a financial corporation from lending itself the money to buy out a newspaper that could act as a house journal and a propaganda organ on the Canadian market. We have such headlines as: "Big-biz takeovers bad news". In my hand I have an editorial entitled: "The macabre feast". On the side of the coin is a headline which states: "Hiram Walker's latest moves are making economic history". Apparently, there is one corporation that

has decided that corporate concentration is perhaps not the way to go.

In the minutes I have remaining I would like to turn to the market where the need for competition is most evident and where it is obvious that Bill C-91 must have some bite and teeth for it to be effective. I refer to the market for refined petroleum products. This is a market in which major multinational corporations have always had control. They have been able, because of their vertical control in the Canadian industry, to exercise price-rigging, to fix the price at any and all levels with very little reference to the needs of ordinary consumers and, indeed, without much regard to government policy either.

I would like to quote from a letter from the Petroleum Marketers Association of Canada which states that Canada has the weakest anti-trust laws of any western democracy. There is little doubt that this Bill will be too weak to do anything about increasing independent share of the market or anything about high gasoline and home heating prices. That is my worry. It is my concern that we will not see eliminated that nine cents per litre which the Petroleum Marketers Association of Canada estimates to be the effect of price rigging and of oligopoly control of the Canadian market. We will not see eliminated that nine cents per litre that Canadian consumers are currently paying as a premium for having the Canadian oil industry controlled by a few major players resident outside the country.

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A press release from the Petroleum Marketers Association of Canada indicates that this mechanism keeps rack prices to independents artificially high, threatens independents that majors will force down retail prices and squeeze margins if independents import cheap gasoline, will be used to keep retail prices up themselves and will be used to maintain inefficiencies. I do not think there is a community in this country that has not felt the impact of this form of price rigging by the oil-company majors. Certainly in my own riding there are a number of communities where competition does not exist, and has never existed, and where there is absolutely no guarantee or certainty that it would exist after the passage of a Bill such as Bill C-91.

In those communities to which I refer, the people have been told very frankly by the oil companies that the oil companies do not consider it necessary to compete in those communities, that they are perfectly willing to continue selling refined oil products at 14 cents per litre in a community that is only 230 kilometres away from here, that it really does not matter to them because it is not part of their marketing strategy. People just 230 kilometres up the road are paying a higher price which now equates to a premium of something like one-third over the cost of gasoline sold in more fortunate communities.

What will Bill C-91 do about those sorts of things? The whole problem with the Bill is that it has been written in large degree with the assistance of the very people who would be