

dential information, and therefore the board has it within its power to amend any confidential information. Clause 23 reads as follows:

Where information that is in its nature confidential, relating to the business or affairs of any person, firm or corporation is given or elicited in the course of any inquiry, the information shall not be made public in such a manner as to be available for the use of any business competitor or rival of the person, firm or corporation.

I think we would all agree with this. I am surprised the minister was not prepared to accept in committee the position taken by my hon. friend from Crowfoot in this regard because, after all, clause 23 is mandatory, so the board's report cannot contain any confidential information. The effect is, therefore, that the report to the board has already been cleaned up or has had removed from it anything which might be offensive to clause 23. What possible objection could there be in these circumstances to publication, and why should publication not be made mandatory?

The best the minister might say is that an enlightened minister would publish all reports which are prepared in the light of the wording of clause 24, because under clause 24 the board cannot include in its report any confidential information. The effect of clause 24 as now drafted is therefore, that there are two screens. First, the board may say: well, no, we are not going to present it for publication. Second, the minister may withhold his approval for publication of the report. In other words, there are two possibilities of withholding the report which conform with clause 23. The fact is, though, that I do not feel there should be this double obstacle. If the amendment of my hon. friend from Crowfoot is accepted, it means that the board would be directed to publish but the minister will still have some right of review to make sure that the information conforms with clause 23. It seems to me that while it may be said that this is not a particularly important point my hon. friend does have a good point here and I am quite prepared to support him. I did not say anything about it in committee, but since my hon. friend has raised the point now I can see that on balance, in the combination of clauses 23 and 24, the amendment makes eminent sense and I would so move.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): I apologize for being a few minutes late, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) for moving the amendment in my absence.

The essence of my submission here is contained in the old adage that it is not enough to be just, one must appear to be just. The question is, how can the public really determine whether the degree of protection advocated by the minister on the recommendation of the board has been correctly assessed unless the report itself is made public? If we read this bill carefully, we realize that provision is already made for the exclusion of confidential information. The minister also has a prerogative in this respect. In these circumstances, why is publication of the report being withheld? It is obviously not possible for the public to judge whether the minister has acted correctly on the basis of the report from the board unless

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the facts are available. As reported at page 15 of Committee Report No. 22, the minister had this to say:

Let me answer in four parts. First of all, I will remind you what the powers of the Board are. The Board has final authority in determining injury, or threat of injury and in determining the value of the plans. When it comes to the degree of protection needed or not needed, they make recommendations to the Minister, and the Minister takes the ball from there.

Then, he went on to say:

Dealing with your second point, during the research, during the inquiry the Board is making, I do not think the Minister will have contact with the Board—

He is really saying, here, that the inquiry will be carried out in an unbiased manner.

As reported on the following page, page 16, the minister outlines the Board's duties at length. Then, he goes on to say:

Then I defend in public whatever decision the government takes. I am quite sure that I will not be able to escape that and I have no intention of doing so, either. Whatever the decision is, the associations, the groups that have taken a certain position during the inquiry, will either bless the government or attack it for the decision it has taken. So I presume my job will be to justify the decision of the government.

How can the public determine whether the minister was justified in reaching the decision he did if they are not given the facts? Suppose, for instance, the board were to recommend that certain imports be held up for a period of one month until further examination could be made to determine whether or not a section of the industry really did possess a viable international market. Suppose the board makes a lukewarm or hesitant recommendation involving some degree of protection, and the minister comes out blatantly for wholehearted protection for a longer period than the board itself had recommended. How can we know the real strength of the board's recommendation to the minister unless its recommendations are made public? Must we judge in the dark or shall we be able to judge from knowledge? Surely, any government which seeks to project a concept that it is dealing with educated people would wish to make the facts known so that the public could judge whether or not the minister was acting in a correct manner. I see the minister nodding his head in approval. I take it that perhaps he will accept my amendment to clause 24.

● (4:00 p.m.)

There is no specific reference in the amendment to confidential reports; it has reference to the publication of reports and whether a minister will make public published reports. The protection of certain industries in Canada may prove harmful to trade, and in most cases the minister will attempt to protect his decision making authority, I suppose, by making reports public only a long time after the issue in question has died, though the minister shakes his head. Since he is so concerned, I should like to read to the House a little more from the committee report because this point was brought up over and over again. In committee proceedings No. 15, the hon.