

Summer Recess

Virtually everyone who has participated in this debate so far has emphasized that Jack Austin was a deputy minister, private secretary to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), and is now a Senator. Without saying more, these hon. gentlemen are trying to weave a picture. They seem to imply that his progress could not be based on talent, ability or knowledge, that his progression had to be as a result of some intrigue, collusion, or unsavoury act, and that this goes on all the time. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) is an expert at this, if you read his questioning of the ability and talent of a lawyer named Brown, just as he questioned the integrity of a Senator not too many months ago. But I do not want to get sidetracked by rabbit tracks if I can avoid it.

I would like to talk for just a moment about the cartel. I think I recall a few of the events of 1972. I was in the cabinet at the time, and the minister at that time laid it out very clearly that Elliot Lake and other cities to all intents and purposes were bankrupt, as hon. gentlemen know. No amount of stockpiling by this government or Denison Mines could have prevented the total bankruptcy of this industry. As I recall, there were not less than 22 productive uranium mines at the time and, because of the selfish attitude of the United States, that number dwindled to only three. What was the attitude of the United States? Contrary to its responsibility as a signatory to GATT it simply let the world know, including Canada, that henceforth no uranium would be imported into that country at any cost. The U.S.A. showed a total disregard for its moral and legal obligations as a trading partner.

The consequences were obvious. The value of the stockpile certainly dwindled as that customer disappeared. The level of unemployment in Elliot Lake was a national disgrace. The minister explained in elegant style that the impact on small businesses and family life was obvious. As mines shut down, miners were surplus. The government did what it was expected to do, move in and do something legal about a horrible social problem.

What did the government do? It formed a cartel with other countries which also had vested interests, against the actions of the United States. And people talk about the Combines Investigation Act! Let me tell hon. members that the establishment of such a cartel for international purposes is perfectly legal, and section 32(4) of the Combines Investigation Act contains that provision. First of all, let us stop right there. According to the opposition, the government was irresponsible in taking advantage of a provision which the signatories to GATT considered to be perfectly legal and which the laws of Canada consider to be perfectly legal, that is, the right to form a cartel or trading bloc with other partners of like interest in the international sphere. That action, of course, was legal and if that cartel were to start—

Mr. Kilgour: That is just another red herring.

Mr. Mackasey: I suggest the hon. member opposite has said enough in this debate. This hon. gentleman has forgotten more about this House of Commons than that hon. member will ever learn. He should be reminded by his colleagues that one of the

courtesies extended in the House in a debate of this importance is that you keep your mouth quiet, your ears open, and you might learn something.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: Canada, because of the value of the stockpile, faced with the terrible impact of the United States' actions on Elliot Lake and other like communities in western Canada, sat down with other uranium interests in order to protect itself against the selfish action of the United States which was, as I remind you, contrary to the spirit of GATT. Today hon. members have said that a meeting was held in the boardroom of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Where did they want the meeting to take place? In the cellar, in the restaurant, or down the street? What was the meeting for? To do something which was perfectly legal under the laws of Canada. Why should the meeting not have been held at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources since it was dealing with mining and uranium?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mackasey: I suspect the furtiveness is not to be found in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, but rather in the warped minds of some members opposite. I repeat, let one member stand between now and 1 a.m. and accuse Jack Austin of corruption or wrongdoing, or suggest that he, too, should appear before the courts. The innuendo has been there in the words of the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona, but let an hon. member have the courage to stand in his place and make charges.

I have seen so many reputations destroyed forever in this House of Commons, during the sixties. I remember a youngster named Guy Lord, working in the office of the late Guy Favreau, who had his reputation destroyed. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) gets a little tired of these insinuations. I saw that youngster's reputation destroyed by innuendo to the point that, when proven innocent months later, he was still out of work and had to go to Paris to continue his practice in the legal profession.

As a personal friend of Jack Austin, I take umbrage at hearing members opposite remind us that he was once secretary to the Prime Minister, deputy minister of energy, mines and resources, and is now a Senator, and that he somehow must have done something terribly wrong by being one of the innovators of a legal action, the success of which, if measured by the alleviation of poverty and the return of prosperity to Elliot Lake, is already in the history books of Canada.

What about Ontario? The hon. member for St. John's East, for whom I have sincere affection, talked about the detrimental impact on the cost of electricity. I share his views. If there has been wrongdoing by these uranium companies they should be prosecuted. I think that is all the Minister of Justice (Mr. Chrétien) has suggested in implementing recommendations which people spent four years determining. But, as someone said earlier in this House, there are certain basic principles in this country. An hon. member opposite said that no one is