

*Competition Bill*

concerned about the absence of competition in this country, they should step back and take a look at the entire economic competitive fibre in this country. There are some hard decisions to be made if we wish a free and totally open marketplace in Canada. The suggestion that another commission should be set up to deal with largely superficial matters will not ensure a completely free market.

In many ways this is an unfortunate example of the government's tendency to gloss over an issue rather than deal with it effectively. This is not the first time they have come up with a solution which in their hearts they realize is ineffective—something like Mrs. Plumptre's board which we all know has been totally powerless to deal with inflation.

The time has come to ask ourselves whether the banking industry in Canada should not be reviewed again, whether there should not be another Porter commission inquiring into banking, which has grown from \$20 billion to \$80 billion. Should we not ask ourselves whether the banks are ensuring a truly competitive marketplace in Canada as far as their lending activities are concerned? Surely we should take steps to make certain that this industry is competitive in the sense that a businessman with proper security and a legitimate need gets the credit necessary to enable him to compete, regardless of his size.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I am sorry, but I must interrupt the hon. member because his time has expired. He may conclude his remarks if there is unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Stevens:** With over 90 per cent of our banking business controlled by five institutions, perhaps we should look into the establishment of a commission to ascertain whether the industry is serving the needs of the business community effectively, rather than deal with superficial matters such as are touched in the bill before us. I suggest, also, that there should be a thorough investigation into the activities of foreign-owned corporations in this country to make sure they are adding to, not detracting from, the competitive nature of our business community. The large corporate blocs in our country should also be reviewed, as should the large union power blocs. I am sorry to say it, but I believe Bill C-7 is an ineffective measure, one which does not deal with the real need in this country, which is the enhancement of a truly competitive business community.

**Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce):** Mr. Speaker, one of the strong points of our democratic form of government is the fact that we allow all sorts of debates to take place, not only in the House of Commons and in the various legislatures but in the newspapers, on radio, television, and so on. But one of the weak points, at least in my estimation, is the length of time this process is apt to take. Just how long should we allow debate to take place before a decision is reached? Surely at some point along the line debate has gone on long enough. Discussion of a bill such as that we are considering this afternoon should result, without too much delay, in the bill being sent to committee where it can be examined in detail and either chucked out or brought back for final reading in order that the people of

[Mr. Stevens.]

Canada might have the opportunity of enjoying the benefits of the legislation.

I listened with great interest, as I always do, to the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Stevens). I am constantly amazed by the variety of viewpoints held by members in the official opposition. The hon. member has just told us that in his opinion the bill before us would, in the long run, hurt competition. This is certainly not what has been said by other members of his party. I wonder if it is fair to ask whether members of the official opposition are not just holding the bill up for purely political reasons.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whicher:** If they will study the views which have been expressed in newspapers, on television and elsewhere across Canada they will find that the vast majority of media commentators have accepted the bill. Some have expressed criticism on the ground that it does not go far enough, but the majority have stated that in their opinion it is a good bill and it should go forward; and they believed it should go forward, not a month from now or five months from now or five years from now but immediately. Indeed, some members of the official opposition have expressed a similar view. Members belonging to the NDP, too.

One of the leading members of the official opposition, the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), has been quoted in the *Ottawa Journal* as saying the bill proposed worth-while measures of consumer protection. He said it offered a lot more than he expected. He called it an important piece of legislation. And he has not disclaimed this quotation in the course of the debate here. That is not what the hon. member for York-Simcoe said. All of us watched on television the meeting the Conservatives held in the Chateau Laurier. We admired the unity which was evident in that great meeting. It is unfortunate they do not show the same unanimity in the caucus meetings they hold every Wednesday morning, because it seems to me that one member says one thing and another says something quite different; they do not know where they are going. As a result, the Canadian people know they are holding up certain laws which ought to be passed if for no other reason than the need to get on to considering other and more important laws. For example, my hon. friend from York-Simcoe suggested inflation, and who am I to say he is not correct that inflation is a major problem in Canada today? But before we can tackle inflation and the many other government bills that are ready to come before this parliament, we have to get this measure out of the way.

• (1550)

**Mr. Stevens:** Why?

**Mr. Whicher:** My hon. friend from York-Simcoe asks why. One reason is that the hon. member for St. John's East has said that it is a good bill. So not only does the government say it is a good bill, but members of the hon. member's own party opposite say it is. I know the press says it is a good bill, that television says it is a good bill and so does radio, yet the government is up against members like the hon. member opposite.