

*Reconstruction and Supply*

Mr. SMITH (Calgary West): I wish you would say it louder so that I would know what you are saying. You just said, "Oh, oh". A woman in childbirth says, "oh" and lots of other things. Monopoly in itself is not bad, but when it takes advantage of that position to drown or kill small people then it is bad. Monopoly, properly operated, may produce things very cheaply, but the minute it takes advantage of that, it is bad, and I think in connection with that this parliament might some day make a study of patents which largely support that position. Where you have monopoly, there you need government intervention, interference, control or whatever you care to call it. Consequently in my conception of the future business and economy of this country, that great partnership between labour, industry and government, I trust that the minister will, if necessary, expand his view and his purview and his authority, so that somewhere in the government we shall at least have a third wheel as a steadying influence to maintain the position of capital and labour and always that great base of the right-angle triangle, the common man, the people who do the consuming, the white-collared guy who pays most of the taxes. Perhaps I disagree with some of my colleagues in that respect.

Section agreed to.

On section 7—Minister's powers over boards and other public bodies.

Mr. SENN: Perhaps the minister would reply to the question I asked about salvage. As I understand it, the War Assets Corporation which has been set up is responsible to the minister's department.

Mr. HOWE: I am just the owner of the thing; I own the shares.

Mr. SENN: I wish to find out, if possible, just what control is exercised over it by the department. Where does it get its powers; what are its powers with respect to disposal of crown assets and where they are to be disposed of, and how; have they to be disposed of by tender; who sets the prices at which they are sold, and so forth? We hear many stories to-day about things that are worth considerable sums of money and cost considerable sums of money being sold for very small amounts. Perhaps the minister could give us a short explanation of the War Assets Corporation's activities.

Mr. HOWE: It is described in section 10 of the Surplus Crown Assets Act, which reads as follows:

(1) There shall be established a corporation to be known as War Assets Corporation.

[Mr. A. L. Smith.]

(2) The corporation shall consist of a board of not less than six directors appointed by the minister with the approval of the governor in council.

(3) The corporation shall be a body politic and corporate having capacity to contract and to sue and be sued in its name; and shall be and be deemed to be for all purposes an agent of His Majesty in right of Canada.

(4) The head office of the corporation shall be at Montreal in the province of Quebec or in such other place as the minister may from time to time determine.

(5) The corporation may establish branches and appoint agents in Canada and may also, with the approval of the minister, establish branches and appoint agents outside Canada.

(6) The corporation shall be responsible to, and be subject to the direction and control of, the minister.

I hardly think a debate on War Assets is appropriate now. At the present time we have a committee on war expenditures sitting. The officers of War Assets Corporation are appearing before it now. I believe the question of salaries is under discussion there at the present time. I hardly think it would be helpful to have a second discussion here in the house, while the discussion is going on before the committee.

Mr. SENN: I have no thought of pursuing the matter any further, Mr. Chairman, because I understand that such an investigation is going on. What about the war assets allocation committee? Does it come under the minister, as well, and, if so, what are its duties?

Mr. HOWE: The crown assets allocation committee is described in section 5 of the Surplus Crown Assets Act, as follows:

The minister, with the approval of the governor in council, may

(a) establish a committee to be known as the crown assets allocation committee.

(b) appoint one of the members of the committee to be chairman and fix the salary, if any, to be paid him;

(c) authorize payment to any member of the committee who is not in the public service of Canada of a fee for each meeting of the committee that he attends; and

(d) authorize payment to each member of the committee of actual disbursements for expenses necessarily incurred in connection with the discharge of his duties under this act.

And then section 7 states:

The committee shall advise the minister on matters relating to the use, disposal of or dealing with surplus crown assets or otherwise arising out of this act which are referred to it by the minister, and in particular without limiting the foregoing, it shall

(a) consider questions relating to surplus crown assets referred to it by the minister and recommend to the minister whether the corporation should sell or otherwise dispose of any such assets or whether they should be dealt with or disposed of in some other way;