

*Combines Investigation Act*

in the domestic market. I think the commission will, as I appreciate the terms of the act and responsibilities imposed upon them, have to address its mind also to the public interest and to the question of whether the public interest is better served by allowing such arrangements at all, whether the general interest of Canada is better served by things that facilitate Canadian companies in export fields and, therefore, any detriment there may be in the domestic field may be outweighed by the general advantage of the economy of the country. It seems to me that is one of the things to which the commission must address its attention. In the light of the fact there is now an inquiry before the commission in which these issues are relevant, it would seem to me to be premature for me to be recommending legislation at this time on that subject.

The hon. member for Middlesex West intervened:

Mr. Thomas: There was another suggestion by the metal mining association—

Mr. Fulton: May I just conclude, Mr Thomas?

On that occasion the minister was not as tolerant of the supporters of the government as he is this evening. The minister went on to say:

I think it is premature because I think the situation will be greatly clarified, and the members of the House of Commons as well as the government, in considering what legislation if any, should be introduced and enacted, will be assisted greatly in that task by the report of the commission.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond then interjected:

Mr. Drysdale: In the meantime, would every consideration be given to these people competing in the world export market, provided their competition is such as not to affect the domestic market—because there is no indication, at present, as to when the decision is likely to come down in this case referred to, and it could be a matter of years? I was wondering if consideration could be given, in the meantime, to those who are engaged in this export field.

The hon. member for Greenwood then stated:

Mr. Macdonnell: Consideration has been given to them for sixty years.

The following exchange then took place between the minister, the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River and the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond:

Mr. Benidickson: Mr. Chairman, has the minister had time, since the representations were made by the Canadian metal mining association and others, on this point, to give it much consideration or to take it to his colleagues; or will he be able, perhaps, to review it between now and the committee stage of the bill in the house?

Mr. Fulton: I have reviewed it, Mr. Benidickson, and the conclusions I have just outlined, in reply to Mr. Thomas' question, were the conclusions to which we came as a result of that consideration. We were not unaware of the problem when we were initially drafting the bill. In fact, we did have a provision in the bill we presented last year, with regard to the export trade in the field of mergers. But when it was decided it would be more appropriate not to make a substantial change in the merger field, that was dropped. We were

considering the position of the export trade with relation to the whole act. I was not able to find any way, in the combination field, that I was satisfied could insulate the effects of arrangements made with respect to export from their effect domestically. We do not have any advice from anybody as to ways of measuring the public advantage of one as against the other.

Mr. Benidickson: I am sorry, but I was reading the act at the time when you made reference to the commission bringing down a report, and that this problem would be one of the points considered. What was the commission?

Mr. Fulton: The restrictive trade practices commission, which is now considering the fisheries case in Vancouver.

Mr. Drysdale: There is unlikely to be any further activity in the export field, provided there is no outward obvious violation of the Combines Act until this particular case is settled. I am not trying to pin the minister down to legal advice, but there is likely to be this period when there is nothing covering the export trade. I wonder if, without putting him on the spot, there is anything he could say to the committee which would indicate the position of exporters with regard to this competition?

Mr. Macdonnell: Do you not think that actions speak louder than words?

Mr. Fulton: I find it hard to answer that without being "put on the spot".

The words "put on the spot" appear in quotation marks.

Mr. Valade: Mr. Chairman, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. McIlraith: Yes, by all means.

Mr. Ricard: It suits the hon. member's purpose.

Mr. Valade: For the sake of clarity would the hon. member in reading his citations also read aloud the periods and commas so we would be able to follow his quotations clearly?

Mr. McIlraith: I could not hear the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Pickersgill: The hon. member wants you to include the punctuation.

Mr. Harkness: That is all the hon. gentleman is leaving out.

Mr. McIlraith: I am prepared to assume that hon. members who are reading the record will recognize the punctuation when they see it. If they are unable to do so I think it would be quite improper for me to indicate it to them verbally. I think to do so would insult the intelligence of hon. gentlemen and I would not wish to do that. I therefore must reject the hon. member's request.

I return to the evidence given by the minister on this point when he took quite a different position from that taken by him today with respect to the amendment. I return to the exchange between hon. gentlemen and the minister at the bottom of page 696:

Mr. Drysdale: I think that is fine, Mr. Minister.