

our marketing system. One of their legitimate functions is that of keeping the market honest.

In the bill before us, Mr. Speaker, the implications for the present system of moving goods to market are so far reaching as to be beyond my comprehension. There is an apparent determination to substitute the judgments of government appointed administrators for the judgment of the market, that is, the forces of the market, in what is acceptable and what is not. It seems to me that the key word to all this is flexibility. Inflexibility is manifest in marketing quotas, formula pricing, adherence to rigid agreements and arrangements. It interferes with orderly marketing. Surely, flexibility leads to beneficial growth.

Unless the philosophy of this government is turned aside, we will end up with an economy in which virtually every business decision will be subject to approval of the government's appointees. There has been a lot of criticism of our grain industry and our transportation industry of late, and probably it can be partly justified in light of today's situation. However, I would ask you to look back on the infamous "task" force on Agriculture of several years ago, which really forecast no future for agriculture. I think it is reasonable to say that industry, the railways in particular, took their cue from this report, made their decisions, and are now being blamed for a shortage of equipment and a lack of foresight, all because of the government's tunnel vision.

• (1540)

The real problem is the same old story. The senior government officials, disdainful of trade, have steered our industry down the wrong track. In this whole question before us today of what is right and what is fair, it seems that we must have some reference to the courts with the accompanying right to appeal. At least this will develop some precedents which are fairly consistent and lay down the guidelines required to keep our business practices under reasonable restraint.

There has to be co-operative consultation between business and all levels of government before and not after policy is determined. Forward planning will become sterile if there are conflicts in and between governments. I fear there is plenty of room for conflicts in the bill before us. We need a competition policy which will permit growth and a restructuring of business according to the market forces, by encouraging flexibility and adaptability in the economy. We will not get it with legislation such as is proposed here. The committee studying this bill will have their work cut out.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I could hardly have asked for a more fitting introduction to the comments I have to make than those provided by my colleague, the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. Hamilton). He talked about the problems the committee will have when it is faced with this particular bill. My misgivings about this bill are many, but I propose to concentrate my attention on one particular aspect of the measure, an aspect which is absolutely fundamental to the process of governing, to the philosophy of government. I am moved to contribute to this debate because of my experience as a public servant

Competition Bill

and because of my understanding of what public servants should and should not be asked to do.

This bill is directed toward extending the powers of the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, created under the Combines Investigation Act. The powers now to be granted to the commission by the terms of the bill before us are to be executive powers. They differ considerably from the powers of the commission as created under the earlier bill. The commission, after investigation, can rule on the practice it has investigated and, depending on the outcome of that investigation, shall rule whether or not that practice is legal and may be allowed to continue or, alternatively, is illegal and shall therefore cease. This is what I mean by the grant of executive powers. The commission is no longer an advisory body. It is first a judicial body and then an executive and operational body in an area of activity where economic and political factors have a strong inter-play. In other words, the government is asking this parliament to delegate powers to a quasi-independent body to take action in an area that is properly the government's sphere of action, the political arena, the determination of the public interest defined in economic and competitive terms.

We have seen this before. We have seen what happens when these quasi-independent bodies get to work with their delegated powers. I will come back in a minute to look at some of the consequences of this kind of delegation of parliament's proper powers, but first I would like to look at some of the philosophy which underpins two of the principal parties in this country.

According to an article which appeared on page 7 of the March 29 edition of the Ottawa Journal, in a newsletter being circulated in the Liberal caucus, an assessment is made of the recent convention of my party which was held in Ottawa 10 days prior to the article being written. Among the "conclusions"—I insist that *Hansard* put quotes around that word—that are drawn in this letter, of the resolutions presented during the convention, the following was considered of key importance, according to the article. I quote:

"The Conservative party is not, as it claims, the standard bearer for individualism and free enterprise except for the big corporations and those already rich. It is now, more even than the New Democrats, the most government-interventionist party in the Commons."

"The Conservative party would intrude government departments, agencies, commissions and boards into every area of Canadian life, into areas where even angels, much wiser beings, fear to tread."

If these are actual quotes from the Liberal caucus newsletter, I must say that I have to admit to amazement. Such allegations, which were presented as "conclusions"—again in quotes—for the Liberal caucus and presumably the Liberal faithful to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest, are to be explained in only one way. If you are yourself guilty of an offense, the best way to obscure the fact is to charge your opponent with that offense.

Intervene in government departments? Intrude into government departments? Can anyone in this House honestly look at government operations these days and say that there is not now a deep, deep and virtually ineradicable Liberal intrusion into government departments, agencies, commissions and boards? Where are the defeated Liberal candidates from the last election? Are there any left without federal employment? Where are the executive