

Competition Tribunal Act

provision which might be improved as a result of representations made in the context of our consultation process, I think he will have every opportunity to raise the issue before the legislative committee. I do not know whether the Hon. Member sits on the committee to which the Bill will be referred, but we will be pleased to debate the question at that time. But each particular case . . . Perhaps you should wait. The Bill is not designed to deal with each particular case. We are proposing a tribunal which will review each case submitted. Then we will be able to see—Sir, you should be listening because I am giving you the answer. If you do not want me to—Was it simply your question you wanted to hear or the answer?

If all you want to hear is the question, no problem, I will just sit down.

● (1630)

[English]

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I was having a little chuckle because I do not think the Member has read the Bill and I really do not think he understands what a conglomerate merger is because he says that that has not been a problem. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it is the Imasco takeover of Genstar and the Gulf takeover of Hiram Walker. I cannot see how he can say that that has not been a problem. It is a problem and that is why the Government introduced this Bill this morning. Where has he been? How can he say that he just wants to fancy the Bill up? Surely he wants to make an effective competition policy. Of course, if the Tories are not interested in effective competition policy, they would be satisfied with that.

[Translation]

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, the provisions of the Bill are there. The cases will be dealt with to their satisfaction. Provision has been made for a tribunal, but they are referring to deals which in some cases have yet to be completed.

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Speaker, I had not planned on asking a question to the Parliamentary Secretary, but I feel that I have to rise following his reply to my colleague for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). It is obvious that the Parliamentary Secretary has not examined Bill C-91 properly. It is obvious that he received a paper prepared by the officials of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or the Minister's office, which he has obediently read, and that he does not understand at all what our competition law is about. His reply clearly shows his crass ignorance about this matter.

Since this Bill will soon be referred to a committee, I urge him to make a serious study, to do his homework and to read the Bill so that he can make an objective and rational contribution when this Bill is considered in committee.

The question asked by the Hon. Member concerned mergers. Bill C-91 is much weaker than Bill C-29 introduced by the former Government, which contained a whole series of factors to be considered for rejecting a merger which would

have harmful effects on the Canadian economy. The Minister has ignored these twelve factors. He has put them aside. He has substantially reduced the strength of the provisions of the law on competition which allow the Government to take action to prevent a merger which would have harmful results for the Canadian economy.

What the Hon. Member for Nickel Belt asked was why the bill was not stronger and did not have more bite as concerns mergers.

Let me ask the question again: Why does the Government not provide itself with a rule that would adequately prevent mergers that are detrimental to the country?

In conclusion, let me say that the previous Government intended to introduce legislation that had teeth. This was hampered by the systematic and unacceptable obstruction of the Tories who were then in opposition. They did not want Bill C-29 to be passed because it would have had the teeth to prevent the kind of excessive mergers now being carried out by big corporations in Canada.

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, if they speak of "crass ignorance", I will counter with "crass negligence". The Hon. Member was a member of the Government, he was a Cabinet Minister for a number of years, so he had every opportunity . . . It is easy now to blame us for opposing certain provisions of their legislation. But when he himself was in Government, when he was a Minister, he had every opportunity to enact legislation that could have had the teeth he is referring to. He should have done so at the time. That is negligence. It is not by saying today that we have not enacted, or that they had a bill that would have been better . . . You only had to pass your Bill. Such ruminations are mere navel gazing and totally disregard your own responsibilities when you had them. We will not answer that kind of question. That was negligence on your part, and today you are bearing the consequences.

[English]

Mr. Nunziata: My, my, my, Mr. Speaker, how defensive the Hon. Member has become. In his submissions, the Hon. Member indicated that people were consulted with respect to the drafting of Bill C-91. We know that the Gang of Five was consulted. I indicated earlier who the Gang of Five was, but just to refresh the Members' collective memory, I will reiterate who they are. They are the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Business Council on National Issues, the Grocery Product Manufacturers of Canada, and the Canadian Bar Association. This is the representative group of business which helped draft this legislation. One commentator said that it is like asking convicted burglars to assist in drafting amendments to the Criminal Code dealing with burglary.

We all know that the purpose of this legislation is to protect consumers rather than to allow big business to find loopholes in it.