

Competition Tribunal Act

the legislation must always provide for punitive action. Agreements which contribute to increasing Canadian exports and substituting Canadian services and products to imports will be eligible for this exemption. The Tribunal will have to take into account these trade realities when deciding whether to authorize these agreements.

Mr. Speaker, another provision of this Bill should help Canada strengthen its position on world markets by relaxing the regulations which govern the creation and operation of joint ventures. Under the current legislation, agreements between competitors affecting only exports are exempted from the conspiracy provisions. However, they are no longer exempted when they limit competition in the domestic market. Well, Mr. Speaker, many observers have pointed out that the wording of the current legislation is vague, extremely restrictive, and likely to impede our performance in foreign markets. There is no doubt that we must clarify and widen this exemption if we want Canada to improve or at least maintain its position as a great trading partner in the present circumstances where international trade is in constant movement and where we must act in the interest of Canadians generally, but especially of our workers who are involved in the export industries, and who need stability and assured markets.

For Canada, Mr. Speaker, international trade is practically a matter of life and death. Through our domestic market of 26 million people, we enjoy the standard of living of an economic superpower. To maintain this enviable position, we must succeed as a trading nation. Out of every dollar of our national income, nearly 30 cents come from sales to foreign countries. That is a lot. These sales to foreign countries are responsible for over 3 million jobs in Canada. Let us not forget it. By making a lot of noise over the past few weeks, Members opposite have tried to lessen the positive impact of the steps taken by our Government to create for Canadians over half a million new jobs, more than 83 p. 100 of which are of a permanent nature.

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what the Canadian people wanted. That is exactly what they asked us to do. If they have elected us, it is because they wanted us to maintain the permanent jobs we had already and create new ones.

The strategy which our Government has put together to strengthen our economy—in other words, to increase the national income, create jobs and help the economy recover—has given excellent results. Over the past 15 months, this strategy has helped Canadian corporations to become serious competitors on international markets. That is the key to our economic growth. Instead of being afraid to attract attention on international markets, we have strengthened our position over the past few months, and the results are quite positive.

If we had listened to those prophets of doom and gloom in the Opposition every time we took a step or considered it, either in terms of foreign investment in Canada or the economic steps that were taken, nothing would have been done and we would still be stagnating in the economic situation left by the former Government which only bothered to create

temporary employment and provide funds which were borrowed by mortgaging the future of young Canadians and our families.

We have changed that. We decided, Mr. Speaker, to reverse that trend, we decided to give back to our fellow citizens that sense of pride that they had lost. It is not with money borrowed by an already heavily burdened Government that we shall put our country on the path to economic recovery. I believe that is obvious. To those prophets of gloom and doom who predicted a loss of 200,000 jobs when the previous budget was introduced in May 1984, we answered by creating over 500,000 jobs during the past year, which means a difference of 700,000 jobs. That was not the first macro-economic blunder of our neighbours in the Official Opposition. But it does not matter. It is not serious. It is only one of those . . . They made so many mistakes that this one blends in with the rest. They don't mention it. They talk about something else.

Mr. Speaker, it is of course up to the businesses themselves to be successful in the market place of Canada and elsewhere. The position of our Government has been to make way again for our companies, our 750,000 small- and medium-sized Canadian companies, which were only waiting for a little help from our Government to feel that they were understood, that there were people in the Government to back them and speak for them.

At this moment of truth, Canadian businesses must come out as the winners by outdoing their competitors with better ideas, better products, better services and a better commercial strategy. Our past shows that we can trust Canadian businesses to meet that challenge. But the Government, and by this I mean Parliament, also has its responsibilities. We draft the basic rules that allow companies to live and thrive. It is up to us to see that those regulations are consistent, that they are relevant and that they foster rather than impede excellence. It is also up to us to see that those regulations are in keeping with the realities and demands of international competition. The Bill before the House will help us, I am sure, assume those responsibilities. I believe this Bill deserves our support and should deserve the unanimous support of the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, in the merger section of the Bill, if this Bill is as good as the Member purports it to be, why is it that conglomerate mergers are not included in the competition policy of Government? Why are conglomerate mergers not included, Mr. Speaker?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the Hon. Member is familiar with the Bill as a whole. If we look at it that way, I would suggest that we took the existing legislation and tried to improve it.

I could go over the major provisions of the Bill, but in that respect I think that no particular problems came up in recent months. The matter has not been the subject of recent consultations, but if the Hon. Member can think of a specific