

Supply—Privy Council

Since there was only a word about this, I shall take it upon myself to inform the house, as minister responsible for the application of the Patent Act and as a former member of the royal commission that inquired into the matter of patents, as well as copyright and trade marks, that this is a question I have had the opportunity of going into and I am aware of the abuses that may be made of the copyright which is the ownership of creative works of others through photocopying machines and other similar modern apparatus. It is obvious that the consideration now being given to the copyright—I said a while ago that the hon. member had mentioned the Patent Act, reference, of course, is to the Copyright Act—is taking this into account.

On the Combines Investigation Act, I repeat that the house should not be under the impression—and no one is entitled to give such an impression—that work now being carried out is being done at a slow pace. I said that as soon as we conclude the very long discussions that my staff and myself, as well as the ministers and the staffs of some other departments have had and are having, I shall shortly be in a position to inform the house of the decisions finally arrived at by the government on the need to review the Combines Investigation Act. We are considering and completing a study of the best and most efficient methods of achieving this purpose.

It has been suggested earlier that the concept one should have of the Combines Investigation Act should be less legalistic, if I may use this term, than economic. That the government is aware of the extremely significant economic role of our entire system of combines investigation, of inquiry into and control of restrictive trade practices is evidenced by the fact that the new legislation providing for the establishment of the Department of the Registrar General will precisely entrust all administration, inquiry and research work related to combines investigation with a department, the responsibilities of which are judicial, of course, in some respects, but mostly economic.

This department will, in an orderly manner and within the framework of the Canadian economic policies of 1966 and the future, look after the enforcement of all these acts consistently and in accordance with the present economic policies of the government.

The member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) mentioned earlier the report submitted by the director of combines investigation and research for 1965, in which he clearly indicates

[Mr. Favreau.]

that the administration of the act is subject to restrictions due to a shortage of personnel in the past and still today. He attempted to interpret the words of the director of investigation and research as blaming the minister and the government of the day; I think he is aware, as I am, that such is not the case. It is just the opposite.

He spoke of government interference with the enforcement and administration of the act in an attempt to restrain its effects. That the director of investigation and research feels quite free to make public certain deficiencies with regard to staff organization and other factors clearly proves that he has a free hand in his administration; he is far from suggesting that some interference might possibly restrain his action. This goes to prove that he is enjoying complete freedom of action.

• (2:30 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Howard: I rise on a point of order. The minister is misquoting what I said. I did not say the government had interfered with the activities of the director or his staff. I said they had stifled potential activities by failure to provide the necessary staff. I did not say the government had interfered directly with the activities of the branch but that it had limited those activities by withholding funds.

[Translation]

Mr. Favreau: I am glad if I have misinterpreted the words of the member for Skeena; I am sorry to have put into his mouth words he claims not to have said, because I am quite sure he mentioned "curbing" the application of the act, which I thought meant some interference designed to overly restrict the action of officials.

With reference to the director of investigation and research, I must say that, recently, within the framework of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, further proof was given of the confidence placed by other countries in the interest shown by Canada to all matters dealing with the control of restrictive trade practices, as well as in the competence of Canadian officials, through the appointment of our director of investigation and research, Mr. David Henry, as chairman of the committee of experts in restrictive trade practices of that organization.

It is a well deserved mark of trust and admiration, and I say that all other members of my staff working on the administration of the Combines Investigation Act are worthy