

Competition Tribunal Act

still a political process in place by which we can occasionally rein in its power, if not in a comprehensive way at election, through political pressure exerted on the Government between elections. Regardless of its size, Government still has accountability.

The debate on Bill C-91 concerns economic power which basically has its way with the Canadian people and the Canadian economy. It has had its way for years in systematically intimidating former Liberal Governments not to do anything about monopolistic power in this country. It has had its way with the present Government by ensuring that it fully agreed with the Government's policy before the introduction of the its legislation. The Government, having made the deal with the devil, is trying to say that it has stood up to these economic powers, when it in fact made an agreement with them.

The absence of good competition legislation in Canada continues to be one of the saddest stories in Canadian history. Canada continues to be a country where very few people make many important economic decisions. I refer to John Porter's book *The Vertical Mosaic*, the subsequent book by Wallace Clement entitled *Canadian Corporate Elite* and other studies which have been made. The trend is obvious that more and more power is being concentrated in fewer hands. That is the exact opposite of what the New Democratic Party believes should be the case. That is why we will continue to oppose this Bill. It does absolutely nothing about that trend.

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I rise to share the concern of my colleagues about the deplorable implications of this Bill. This Bill reflects a long history of inadequate competition legislation in the House, beginning with the Liberals and now being propagated further by the Conservative Government.

When one listens to the debate, one cannot help but reflect on how many monopolies in Canada are controlling our lives. Many Canadians do not realize the very subtle and, in many ways, evil influence. My colleagues have referred several times to the nine large, rich and powerful families who control most of the stocks in the Toronto stock exchange. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in British Columbia, and I am sure in other provinces in the west as well, we do not have to dig very deep at all to see the monopoly powers of the Canadian Pacific Railway. These kinds of powers were given early in our development to this huge monopoly, which even to this day controls our lives and developments in a very anti-social way.

● (1210)

I would like to give a couple of examples I hear about frequently in Vancouver. The fact is that the CPR moved funds from the gifts given to it by the Canadian Government into a merchant fleet which was taken out of Canada. That in effect ruined any chance of a merchant marine in Canada. Instead, the merchant fleet went to places like Panama, where it is allowed to employ non-Canadian crews, thereby destroying the potential for Canadian jobs in Canadian shipping. That is the monopoly of the CPR.

Even last week when I was in my riding of Vancouver East the powers of Marathon Realty, which is a branch of the CPR, made apparent its influence in anti-social development. The transfer points for dangerous commodities in downtown Vancouver is being moved eastward into my riding of Vancouver East. It is alleged that this is largely because Marathon Realty wants to develop expensive condominiums at the location where these downtown rail and ferry lines meet. All of the recommendations made by the planners to get the dangerous goods right out of the city were completely disregarded. We do not want them moved from one very densely populated residential area into another. All good sense would say that these dangerous goods should be moved right out of Vancouver. I must say I am extremely disappointed that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski) has allowed this decision to go forward.

You may think, Mr. Speaker, that this particular example is a bit distant from this particular Bill. However, it illustrates the total power of monopolies and corporations which really control our lives, and do not allow either businesses or communities to flourish.

I would like to put some points on the record about the background of competitive legislation reform which, according to one expert, has been one of the "saddest experiences in Canadian public policy". This Bill is the finale to a very sad history of abortive gestures in dealing with competition reform in Canada. That is not just a judgment of the New Democratic Party, but is an assessment of one of the leading competition economists in Canada, Mr. Irving Brecher of McGill University. In 1981, in a study called "Canada's Competition Policy Revisited", he stated:

This judgement is made all the more painful by the realization that, contrary to often expressed belief, the outcome was not inevitable or beyond the control of Governments determined that it be otherwise.

This is the story of continuing failure over a long period of time. The Economic Council began its deliberations toward a modern competition policy in 1966. Its interim report was completed in 1969. Probably one of the best competition Bills was tabled in 1971, Bill C-256. Perhaps the Speaker who was here at that time remembers that Bill. As of today, however, none of the studies, commitments, Bills or speeches in this House have produced a law which would reform our simplistic, judicially hamstrung and grossly ineffective competition law. Only one very modest Bill was passed.

Today we are being asked to accept Bill C-91 as the ultimate development in competition policy. According to the experts, and I do not profess to be an expert in this field, this is not true at all. It is a fifth generation descendant of a Bill which has been trying to pass this House since 1971. Bills C-256, C-42, C-13 and C-29 all attempted to reform competition law in this country, and all failed. One certainly wonders why.

Anyone who believes that competition law reform is a priority for this country, either under the Liberals or under the Conservatives, should approach Bill C-91 with a good deal of suspicion. The question is not what is in this Bill, but what is