

Competition Tribunal Act

convincing Members of Parliament to water down competition policy. The Hon. Member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine East (Mr. Allmand) mentioned the big five, the National Council on Business Issues and so on, that are lobbying very hard in this area. I notice the advisory council, for example, is made up of people from the business community and the business community only.

I am really concerned as a Member of Parliament in a riding that represents a lot of very ordinary Canadians that their voice is not being heard when legislation of this type is drafted. The Member was the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs at one time. I know personally where he stands on these issues. He is a good progressive Liberal. He would like to see a much tougher competition policy, but why was this not done when the Liberal Party was in power? It was in power for many, many years. The Liberals had several studies, several different papers and they made several different attempts at changing competition policy. Why was the Liberal Party always consistently persuaded by big business to come out with a toothless tiger when it came to competition policy?

I know the Member will and say that the Liberal Party did not get enough pressure from the NDP. I do not think that is good enough. The Liberals were the Government. They had a majority. Why were they not able to stand up to the business community in Canada and defend the ordinary Canadian workers, ordinary Canadian farmers and small business? Why could the Liberals not do that? They had a mandate for many, many years.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, there was some legislation passed. As a matter of fact, I think my hon. colleague, the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) was the Minister in 1975 when Bill C-2 passed. Perhaps that is the Bill he does not have on the list. He mentioned Bills C-256, C-42, C-13, C-29, and now C-91.

● (1150)

In answer to my hon. colleague's question, following the strong lobbying against Bill C-256, it was divided into two Bills. It was a long, very complicated, omnibus type Bill. Part of it was made Bill C-2 and the other was referred to a parliamentary committee under the chairmanship of Norm Cafik who, at that time, was the Member for Ontario. After a certain amount of debate in the House, Bill C-2 was passed. Some of the things originally proposed by the Economic Council were passed in Bill C-2.

The Member's question is still a legitimate one. As I tried to indicate in my original remarks, when these Bills were introduced and sent to committee the big business community, in particular, strongly opposed them. I went out looking for support for the Bills. I invited people to appear before the committee. Professor Stanbury, other academics, the Consumers Association of Canada, and other organizations such as the Independent Petroleum Association did support it. However, for every national association which supported the Bill, about

20 well organized and heavily financed organizations opposed it.

Members of the House of Commons in all political Parties were receiving all kinds of letters. The letters did not all appear to be coming from the big business community. Letters were received from individuals saying what terrible legislation this was and very few letters were received in support of the legislation. That is in contrast to the heavy lobby on both sides when the Government attempted to deindex the old age pension.

I was committed to the Bill, but I had a hard time convincing many of my colleagues who were preoccupied with other issues in caucus and in Parliament. I looked for support from all Parties at the time, and priorities were elsewhere; with energy, interest rates, employment, or whatever. I had a very difficult time, as a Minister, convincing ordinary people in the church groups and the various coalitions which usually support these things, that this was just as important an issue for the things they believed in, including lower prices, anti-inflationary tendencies, and better services and products. With 20 Bills on the Order Paper, great support for 19 of them, and all kinds of opposition to poor competition Bill No. C-13, I had a tough time convincing my colleagues that we should spend time on it in the House of Commons.

All of these Bills have led to a refining of the negotiation process. It is obvious that the present Bill C-91, built on the negotiations undertaken by Miss Erola and those undertaken by myself, is more acceptable to the business community. I hope that we at least get this Bill through.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, would the Member admit that the reason it is more acceptable to the business community is that the Government's advisory group consisted of the Business Council on National Issues, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Grocery Products Manufacturing Association of Canada, and the Canadian Bar Association? All of these groups are very conservative, big business oriented groups which I am sure would not represent many members of the Conservative Party who pretend to believe in so-called free enterprise and small business in the country. Does the Member agree that perhaps this is why this Bill is now acceptable to the big business community in the country? In effect, they have written the doggone Bill and it is something they can live with. There has been no representation from farmers, trade unions, consumer representative groups, community associations, women's groups, or native groups. Is this Bill more acceptable to big business because it was conceived by big business and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Côté) is now delivering it on their behalf? Is that not the case?

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Hon. Member. I think the Bill is more acceptable because concessions have been made. We will be dealing with the Bill in committee, at which time I hope we can convince Government Members, upon hearing witnesses, that there should be changes. If there