

Investment Canada Act

answers from their own Conservative Members of Parliament who represent the Hamilton region. I think the conspiracy of silence among back-benchers of the Conservative Party will be reflected in the actions of voters in the Hamilton area in the next election. People expect more of their Members of Parliament. They expect them to defend their constituents' interests.

I have found that we as an Opposition have been required to put up all the speakers for these motions before us on Investment Canada. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, if you asked individual back-benchers for the Hamilton area to try to defend their silence when their constituents are losing jobs because of the lack of provision in the Act and the lack of willpower by the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion to protect their interests as labourers and as contributors to the economic activity of the Hamilton region, you would be astounded by the lack of response.

When we talked earlier about the way in which the previous government Bill, the Foreign Investment Review Act, was put into place, and the way in which we have used it over the years, there seemed to be a misconception that FIRA was responsible for a decrease in the flow of foreign capital into the country over the last seven to eight years since it was implemented in the mid-1970s. Nothing can be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. There has been only one year in which foreign investment showed a decrease in terms of the amount invested in this country. That year was 1981. It was the year in which the National Energy Program was introduced by the Liberal Government. The reason for a net outflow of capital was the buy-out of the multinationals so we could have a window on the oil industry. With the exception of 1981, despite the existence of the Foreign Investment Review Act, there has always been a surplus of foreign investment in Canada.

I remember very well the speech made by the Minister when first reading was given to the Investment Canada Bill. He made quite a thing of the fact that he felt with the implementation of Investment Canada billions of foreign investment would flow into the country. To this day I am still waiting to see the result of that new mood of optimism expressed by foreign investors. The facts do not show that these dollars have flowed into Canada in the last six months. If anything, the situation is to the contrary.

Much was said about the Prime Minister's economic statement in his speech to the business community in New York last fall about how he felt that Canada was open for business again. As my Leader has said, whoever said that it was closed? Canada has never been closed. Every year we have had more and more foreign investment pour into the country, even under FIRA which did a lot more to protect Canadian interests than this Investment Canada Bill. I suspect that if in the United States, the country in which the Conservative Government has put so much hope, the rebound in the economy that is supposed to bring all kinds of goods to Canada as well as investment and job opportunities fails to materialize, the people of Canada will not forget what this Government stands for.

• (1610)

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to make a few remarks on this third grouping of amendments to this Bill. I suggest that the principle involved in this grouping of amendments is one that should certainly be acceptable to government Members. The principle is one that they used as the basis for a good deal of their campaign in the last election. It is the principle of accountability combined with the principle of the right of the public to know, the principle of open Government. We heard a great many of those phrases in the few months prior to the election. We have not seen a great deal of result since the election on September 4.

The Conservative Party has a legacy of which I am sure you are aware, Mr. Speaker. Before I came into the House I was very much aware of the fight that was put up by Ged Baldwin leading the campaign for freedom of information. That whole movement was initiated in the early 1960s by Barry Mather, a New Democrat from British Columbia. It certainly achieved a great deal of prominence under Mr. Baldwin. In the last Parliament, the late Hon. Walter Baker carried on that struggle for freedom of information. The whole principle of open Government was something we heard espoused time and again by Conservative Members when they were sitting on the Opposition side.

When the testimony was being presented before the committee on this Bill, the former commissioner of FIRA, Mr. Gorse Howarth, testified that very often the present legislation respecting the Foreign Investment Review Agency left no option but to keep everything concealed and hidden. Secrecy was built into the law. That was one of the unfortunate drawbacks of the present legislation. Unfortunately, the previous Government built that in. One criticism business often made of that legislation was that it felt that it was before some sort of star chamber. Mr. Howarth pointed out that there has been no change, that the criticism that people made of the present FIRA legislation also applies to the legislation respecting Investment Canada. What was required to be secret and hidden under the FIRA legislation will also be required to be secret and hidden under the present legislation. We want to see that opened up, as I am sure many Members opposite would like to see.

We all recognize that there is a need for business confidentiality. If business is going to operate, it has to be able to do so with the knowledge that not everything it does will be on the front page of the paper or in the business section of *The Globe and Mail* the next day. The whole concept of business confidentiality can be abused, very much like we have seen an abuse of the concept of national security or Cabinet security.

I will give an example from my own riding. Last year people in that area were very concerned about the export of raw logs from our area. I applied under the Freedom of Information Act to obtain details about these exports. I tried to find out where these raw logs were going, what volume was involved, and what prices were being paid. I was not able to get that information. The answer I received was that to reveal that