

Investment Canada Act

We are trying to make clear what we expect in terms of performance. For example, at one time in Canada there was an operation known as Otis Elevators. At that time it was called Otis-Fenson, but it became Otis Elevators and was in the forefront of conveying people automatically whether by escalator or by elevator. It was on the leading edge of the new technology. It employed substantially large numbers of people. It built all around the world. In fact, there was hardly a building in Canada of any size which did not have an Otis product.

Then along came United Technologies. United Technologies is a company which is well known in its home state of New Jersey for its harsh treatment of communities and for not living up to its obligations. At the time United Technologies applied for permission to take over Otis I personally objected, along with many other Members. I pointed out that its record of performance was one of which we could not be proud, that its record would not stand any kind of test with regard to good corporate behaviour. I suggested that it would be inappropriate for the review agency of the day to approve the take-over. It was approved anyway. We were to get more jobs, new technology, new engineering and all kinds of wonderful world mandates. We were to grow by leaps and bounds. The new Otis was to be in the forefront of world technology and, by God, Canada was to be a recipient of all the benefits.

Well, Otis is almost closed now. A handful of people now work there. All the viable parts of the operation have been shipped away to other parts of the world. All that is left is a very tiny operation. Where once there were hundreds of employees, there are now less than a hundred. By all statements and indications, within the next very short period of time the company will cease to exist in Canada in any meaningful or worth-while way. This angers me, but there is no point in getting angry any longer about it. It distresses me that the Government did not pursue with sufficient vigour and diligence its responsibilities to Canada when it gave permission to United Technologies to take over that vibrant and large employer.

I sense that the new Conservative Government, unless we are able to get certain kinds of amendments incorporated into this Bill, is even less willing to extract from those who would be prepared to invest the kinds of commitments which would ensure that Canada would receive lasting benefit. Also I sense that there is a feeling in the Government that any investment is good investment and that any technology is good technology, notwithstanding the fact that our experience shows that that is frequently not the case. I could refer to a whole list of them, but I chose that one because it is a larger one.

I notice Mr. Speaker indicating that I have only a minute remaining, but experience shows it is not true that just because some major corporation or some investor some place else happens to have money to invest, it will necessarily benefit Canada. Therefore, we have to be absolutely clear in the legislation that not only do we hope to see new investment—and we do—but that there will be appropriate terms and conditions established by the Government with regard to the

kind of technology and the commitment to future growth any potential investor must undertake. We have to be absolutely clear right from the outset that the United Technologies of the world—and there are many of them; I am sure the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) will remember the United Technologies take-over of Otis—no matter how much money they are prepared to put in, no matter how much they are prepared to commit themselves on paper, are of no long-term value to Canada. The only thing which can save us from the manipulation which that kind of corporation undertakes is firm guidelines established in law.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, it is very kind of you to recognize a Conservative. I notice that there are not as many of us jumping up and down as there are members of the Opposition. There is a very good reason for this. The debate so far on this Bill has flogged it to death. The same old arguments are being rehashed time and time again by members of the Opposition. It is a stated fact that we on this side of the House do not rise to engage in that type of activity. We only rise when we have something sensible to say. That is precisely what I will do right now.

Some Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Nickerson: I hope that I will not be the exception to the rule. What I am about to do will utterly confound you, Mr. Speaker, because I intend to speak to Motion Nos. 1 and 2 that are before us. No other speaker has done that as yet.

Motions Nos. 1 and 2 deal with the preamble or the statement of purpose of the Bill. I do not really like the idea of writing down preambles or statements of purpose in Bills. Perhaps it would be better to have a bunch of "whereas" clauses prefacing a Bill. In my opinion one should be able to determine the intent of a Bill by reading it. One does not need to have a statement of purpose at the front of it. It serves no useful objective in statute law. That is certainly the position I take. It lends itself to all kinds of flowery language, all kinds of motherhood statements.

● (1230)

That is precisely what we have in the three versions of the preamble from which we have to choose today. We talk about increasing capital, increasing technology, encouraging investment and all this type of thing. I do not think that adds anything to the actual law that is contained in the Bill before us. In statute law or in legislation we should try to confine ourselves to giving directions to people to do something or to writing down prohibitions, that people are not allowed to do something else, together with the necessary definitions and a list of penalties. If we can avoid political statements and flowery language which is rather meaningless in law, we should certainly avoid that.

What we have before us is a choice of three statements of purpose. To be quite frank, I do not really like any of them. At the end of my presentation I will make a proposal, not in the form of a motion but just as a suggestion, as to what I think the statement of purpose would be which would most accurately