

Bank Act

they have their fingers in a couple of banks. That looks like interlocking directorships.

● (2020)

I am glad the hon. member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn) drew attention to my lack of understanding of business. But I have some questions, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it is time we all acquired a profound understanding of business and how it affects us. One of my colleagues says that Brother Bennett in British Columbia has been teaching us lessons. He subscribes to the same school of thought as the hon. member for Mississauga South.

We are looking at this particular organization with its paltry \$28 million, which is a nice increase over last year, and also at the tremendous assets of the corporations around them. I find that CPR and one of its major subsidiaries is represented, as is Imperial Oil. I have forgotten which of these corporate citizens of Canada is concerned in this, but when we are learning the lesson of business that the hon. member for Mississauga South mentions, we notice that one of the advertisements on the program "Hockey Night in Canada" shows a big globe turning around. A man walks out on stage with a brace and bit. He stops the globe, then gets up on a ladder and puts the brace and bit against Canada and screws a big hole in it. That has just got to be Imperial Oil, Mr. Speaker. He screws a big hole in the globe and says, "We are basically working for Canada." I think that is some of the most honest advertising that has ever appeared on television. I cannot really tell which is screwing Canada the worst. Imperial Oil is doing us, so is the CPR. They are in a very exclusive club with the banks.

When I look at the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce I see Conrad Black of Argus Corporation and J. P. Gallagher of Dome Petroleum. They control \$50 billion in assets and have interlocking arrangements through the Sun Life Assurance Company. I have to ask myself who controls the banks, Mr. Speaker. Is there a widespread representation of Canadian citizens or is it entirely Canadian citizens who influence the direction of the banks? To my own question I have to answer no, it is not.

The amendments we have introduced would ensure that Canadians control those banks, that Canadian representation on the boards of directors was much broader and that the sensitivity to Canadian issues was much increased.

I should like to pursue this avenue, Mr. Speaker. We have J. Edgar Kaiser whose daddy, down to the south, was Kaiser Steel and was also involved in oil companies. J. Edgar Kaiser was teaching British Columbia a lesson about business—along with his buddy, Bill Bennett. At one time the people of British Columbia, through their government, owned a large number of forest companies and other corporations that private enterprise had abandoned—along with the jobs and benefits to the community. The government of British Columbia picked up those companies and began to make a tremendous amount of money. The companies were extremely profitable. There were forest companies in northern British Columbia and the Kootenays; there was Westcoast Transmission and all those other

beauties. When Bill Bennett was elected he decided to teach the people of British Columbia about business—just as the hon. member for Mississauga South suggests. He said, "We are going to take all those corporations that are making money and put them together in a big company called B.C. Resources Investment Corporation. Some of us had another, more affectionate, name for it, Mr. Speaker. He was going to put all the profitable companies together and sell them back to British Columbia. That was our first lesson in business. He was going to give everyone a couple of shares and let them buy the rest. People bought them up at \$6 per share. The B.C. Resources Investment Corporation wound up with one of the largest piles of money there is anywhere. However, they procrastinated about what they would do with the money while the people of British Columbia waited for the value of the shares to increase, just like the bank shares.

Eventually, the corporation decided to buy the shares of young J. Edgar Kaiser's business and put in a bid at \$44 for a share. It was not good enough and the bid was withdrawn. But several months later they made another bid at \$55 per share. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, even the president of the B.C. Resources Investment Corporation thought it would be a good idea to buy some of the shares and he did. J. Edgar Kaiser also bought some. At \$55 per share he decided it was time to let BRIC take over the shares for a tidy sum, not only for the president of that company but for himself and many of the directors of his company. They all made a tidy profit on that deal at the expense of the people of British Columbia who were being taught how the marketplace works by a fellow traveller of the hon. member for Mississauga South. Now they have a big chunk of J. Edgar's business. It was a very expensive lesson indeed.

There is more to that story, Mr. Speaker. Benefits were negotiated by Kaiser. He was allowed to buy back assets at cost; he has been given a 15-year agreement on coal, and he has a commission to sell coal that has already been sold. As a matter of fact, the people of British Columbia were taken to the cleaners by Bill Bennett and J. Edgar Kaiser, Junior.

I am frightened, Mr. Speaker, that the lessons given by companies like Imperial Oil, CPR, and J. Edgar Kaiser's coal operations in southeastern British Columbia are not the lessons the people of Canada want to learn. I suggest that the lesson of Chrysler, Massey-Ferguson and many other corporations are not the kind we need to learn either. In fact, if there was greater public accountability, a broader holding of shares involving more Canadians, there would not be some of these very sharp business deals that fill the pockets of a small number of Canadians—the old boy group that has been mentioned.

I defy the hon. member to say that it is not so; that people have not been hurt. They have been skinned, Mr. Speaker. There are many honest businesses in this country but there are some that need more direction. Some people in positions of power have harmed Canadians and we would like to see an end to that. If we were to broaden the base of shareholding, it would be a step in the right direction.