

Investment Companies

If we agreed with this principle and did so in the future, we would move ahead much more quickly. We would have more say about inflation and about the nature and extent of growth and productivity. I think the time has come when these overlapping distinctions between financial institutions and corporations should be put together in one corporations act so we could recognize that to some extent they perform similar kinds of functions. To the extent that they are different, special clauses could exist within the framework of an over-all corporations act which would take into account the specific functions of institutions which may be somewhat more specialized than others.

In some ways the different approach to financial institutions under a corporations act might bring beneficial results, particularly with regards to foreign ownership. I find it very difficult to understand the logic of the government and of the other place that financial institutions should be protected from foreign takeovers, but the industry of Canada, the basis of our wealth and prosperity, requires no such protection.

It seems to me that a finance company exercises less influence on the destiny of this country than does investment in automobiles, mining, or pulp and paper, to give a few examples. Therefore, we should be looking at a corporations act that picks up some of the good features of these financial bills and encompasses a total philosophy that we can develop toward the nature and operation of corporations of all kinds in this country. I know that generally this is not done and probably there is not much precedent in other countries for so doing.

When the minister spoke it was quite obvious that some of the bills that come before us—and this one in particular—were to some extent modelled on legislation south of the border. It is time we did something that made more sense for Canada than copying what other countries are doing. We should be developing a philosophy within the framework of an over-all corporations act.

There is another problem that arises in the examination of finance bills, and perhaps it arises in the examination of almost any piece of legislation before the House. I refer to conflict of interest. It has been sensibly pointed out on a number of occasions that everyone has a conflict of interest. Certainly everyone in this House, and perhaps every citizen in Canada, has a conflict of interest. If you are going to insist that people who examine

[Mr. Saltsman.]

this legislation be absolutely free of conflict of interest, you will never find anyone who can do this kind of work. But it should not end there. While recognizing the difficulties involved in this conflict of interest, and that it is almost impossible to say that anyone who has the slightest conflict should not be involved in drafting this legislation, we can ensure that everyone states their position when they examine the legislation.

If this were done, much of the suspicion that surrounds financial bills and some provisions of the legislation passed in the House would disappear. In my opinion it is not necessary to exclude people per se, because they are involved with financial institutions, from examining them. It may be their experience would be of some help. What is important is that the public know what is their involvement in financial institutions, so they can be judged according to the suggestions they make and the kind of votes they pass on such legislation.

There is not much time this afternoon to do more than make these few brief remarks and to point out that there will be adequate opportunity for us to examine this legislation in the committee. But I urge hon. members, through you, Mr. Speaker, to consider the two main plants that I have tried to make: first, that institutions tend to blend into each other so that it is becoming very difficult to differentiate one from the other. Therefore, we need an all-encompassing corporations act that will take this fact into consideration. Second, in order that absolute confidence be maintained in the decisions taken in the House and in the other place, members of both Houses should be required to state their interest in any legislation.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We have now had some time to consider this bill. Unanimous consent, which was essential so that the matter could be placed before the House today, was not withheld. This is a very important bill, and as the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) said, some of us have grave reservations about certain aspects of it and would like to re-examine the bill in light of what the minister has said. In view of the fact that this progress has been made, I believe there is a disposition that Your Honour call it six o'clock, rather than the time which now appears on the clock, so that the bill could again be brought forward at such time as the government sees fit.