

Private Bills

What this bill would do is create that authorization. The company would then be able to apply to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs for letters patent for continuing the company under federal jurisdiction and under the control of the Canada Corporations Act. The bill would enable this House to take the reins of control out of the hands of Alberta.

Unlike the Central-Del Rio bill, Bill S-16 does not ask the House for permission to allow an amalgamation. Although an eventual amalgamation is presently contemplated, it will take some time to complete. In the event of an amalgamation, it would be under the control of the Canada Corporations Act. This bill simply allows the company to move under federal jurisdiction. Possible amalgamation under that jurisdiction is only one aspect of the company's operations over which the federal government will gain control.

It should also be stressed that this bill only enables an application to continue under letters patent. A discretion with respect to that application remains with the minister who works within the guidelines of the Canada Corporations Act.

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, it seems strange that the sponsor of the bill should at this time suffer from the same difficulties he suffered from when the bill was considered by the Senate Banking Committee. When the committee was called to order, it was suggested that somebody else should submit the bill to the committee. Counsel for Mic Mac Oils (1963) Ltd. suggested that the sponsor of the bill was somewhere between his riding and this House. The chairman could not see why the sponsor was not present to introduce the bill. Possibly there is some reason for his absence today.

We have heard considerable debate in this House in the last while about surtaxes, foreign ownership and the employment within Canada of men working for foreign-owned corporations. The President of the United States has said that he would lift the tax load from corporations operating in the United States and enable them to increase their exports. Naturally, we realize that this move can do nothing but harm employment in Canada. This is the main reason that bills such as this should be given thorough consideration. Questions must be asked and answered. Unfortunately, the hon. member speaking for the sponsor did not suggest that this company would be prepared to abide by the amendment we have proposed to another bill pertaining to the Bank Act. That amendment, if accepted, would mean that Canadian ownership of companies would be retained.

I was pleased to hear the hon. member speaking for the sponsor suggest that the shares outstanding of this company are Canadian owned. The fact that the company at present is a Canadian company is not good enough, so far as I am concerned. I can only refer to another situation. We have tried to introduce an amendment to another bill, the effect of which would be that a clause relating to Canadian ownership would be included in every bill of this type that comes before the House. Unfortunately, as one of the witnesses before the committee said, there is no way of making sure that shares will remain in Canadian hands if they go on the stock market. That is the situation. If the hon. member can say that he has had an indication

from the people sponsoring this bill that they will adhere to the suggested provisions in the Bank Act amendment, I shall not object to passage of this bill. If the hon. member could say that, he could save a lot of discussion at this time.

● (5:10 p.m.)

If one looks at the background of the company one will see that Mic Mac Oils (1963) Ltd. was formed on a merger of Consolidated Mic Mac Oils Ltd., Mac Oils Ltd., Mayfair Oil & Gas (1961) Ltd., Mic Mac Oils (1963) Ltd. and Twinning Pipeline Ltd. We must ask ourselves whether mergers of this type are in the best interest of Canada, since they do away with the competitive spirit we have seen in the past. I need only refer to the recent increase in the cost of living index, particularly as it pertains to food. When the shopping centres were involved in a price war, the cost of food to the consumer went down. As an analogy to the bill before us, I suggest that if there are too many mergers you can expect the cost to the consumer to increase. There is no competition. This argument is borne out by what happened to food prices after the supermarkets agreed to discontinue the price war. Yesterday we saw the reports indicating what happened as far as food, other than fruits, was concerned. If we are concerned about the so-called protection to the consumer, protection to people dependent on food processing or, in this case, the results of the various consolidations of the companies we see before us, we must take this area into consideration.

When we look at the various aspects of the bill before us, we see that there is not too much to it. On checking the records, we find that there will be an increase in the holdings of Hudson's Bay Oil and Gas Limited. We must look at the situation to determine exactly what has happened in the past and why these companies merged. I do not suggest that certain mergers are not in the interests of the Canadian public. However, if these mergers result in control of the product being in the hands of a few large corporations, then we must write into this bill some protection for the Canadian consumer. We must somehow bring about a Canadian type of ownership.

We have recently read many observations, heard many debates in this House and listened to professors talk about Canadian ownership as well as the debate now going on with regard to the tax act. We realize more and more people are concerned about the ownership of those areas that should be Canadian controlled. Unfortunately, some members are not really concerned about what may happen to Canadian industry. In fact, this subject came up in a recent committee meeting. I quote:

On the point of order, first of all there is no government policy, no Canadian policy about foreign ownership as yet, and therefore I think Mr. Skoberg is out of order. He cannot force them to go into anything, or promise anything in that direction, unless there is some sort of a policy adopted by Parliament, and there is not such a thing yet.

Surely, the members of this House will not disagree with the idea of including in bills before us a provision that there be a majority Canadian ownership of any industry within our jurisdiction. There is considerable debate throughout the country as to whether we should insist on complete ownership of industry or whether regulations under the act will be sufficient. I suggest that this Parliament could pass those regulations. The companies