

Private Bills

As the hon. member for Timiskaming said, Canada ought to develop her own economy. The way to do that is by telling our friends to the south that we must participate in the development of this economy. We welcome their capital which, I am sure, has helped us over the years. But the type of capital coming in has changed. At the turn of the century capital coming in did not involve the foreign ownership of our assets. Now, equity capital is coming in, and with that our assets are coming under foreign domination. This fact is dramatically exemplified if one studies Avco Insurance Company. They have brought with them their capital and have demanded what is known as equity ownership, foreign ownership in this case. We, as Canadians, must be alert to this problem. The hon. member for Middlesex and other hon. members in his position ought to say, "As a representative of this company and as sponsor of this bill I am prepared to suggest to this company that Canadians must be permitted an equity in ownership as well as participation in company growth. Canadians should be permitted the opportunity of becoming directors of the company and making decisions."

Only in this way can we maintain our identity as Canadians and show men like George Ball, who think we are fighting a rear guard action and that it is only a matter of time before we become the fifty first state, that they are wrong. I am certain that if men like the hon. member for Middlesex, the sponsor of the bill—I am glad to see the hon. member for Hamilton is here—as well as cabinet ministers and their friends realize that this is the No. 1 issue in Canada, they will direct their minds, efforts and attentions to the creation of a country which will be developed by Canadians for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Beaudoin: Mr. Chairman, I believe the question now under study is far more important than it might seem to be, and that, for two reasons.

I believe it should be given precedence over all other questions under study. The London and Midland General Insurance Company—in French, la London et Midland Compagnie d'Assurance Générale—according to the statutes, changed its name in 1947 for that of the Progressive Insurance Company of Canada. In 1957, it changed its name again to become known as the Progressive and now it is to be called the AVCO General Insurance Company. I believe that although the company acquainted the committee to some extent with its portfolio, its directors and president

[Mr. Gilbert.]

did not prove that they wanted to reveal their names.

As stated by the members who spoke before me, that is the members for Timiskaming and for Broadview (Messrs. Peters and Gilbert), AVCO is dished out all around: AVCO Finance, AVCO Aviation, AVCO this, AVCO that. If the London and Midland, which now calls itself AVCO General Insurance Company, really wants Canadians to hold a majority of its shares some day, it must continue to prove its seriousness with regard to its policy holders.

For instance, once the insured has paid his premium, the policy belongs to him and at some given time he may find out that the company is known as the London and Midland, La Progressive, and AVCO. He must certainly trust his insurance salesman and I think he must have great confidence in the general economy or in the seriousness of the legislation of our country which allowed the company, by granting it a federal or provincial charter, as the case may be, to do business in Canada.

Our concern today is the granting of a federal chart. I guess the policy holder can feel confident, but what about the little man, who owns such a policy? Indeed, we know that in most provinces today, especially if we consider the act granting compensation to the victims of accidents, it is important to know where one stand.

I need not mention here those companies which have already been granted federal charts in the last three, four or five years, nor incriminate them, but I daresay—that two of them as least—have gone bankrupt since.

I do not think that because the London and Midland went bankrupt in England is a good reason to change its name into the common name of Avco. I call it a common name because here in Canada the United States' Avco is a household word. I think the idea is rather to enjoy the monopoly of a name so that the publicity made by anyone of the companies may benefit the others. In my opinion, that would be extremely detrimental and would affect the confidence of the Canadian people with regard to investments in that company.

As far as we, the legislators, are concerned, we must be worthy of the confidence of our constituents. As stated by the hon. member for Broadview, that confidence should rise upward and spread from left to right.

I think we should be given conclusive evidence that the name of the company should