

Canadian Arsenals Limited

Council sometime in the future which will dictate what kind of arrangement *vis-à-vis* pension contributions these 800 employees will have". That is not the right way to deal with individuals who have been contributing to the system for a number of years. That is not the way by which families can build their futures. That is not the way the Government should be conducting its business on behalf of Canadians. It does not speak very highly of the motives of the Government. If it wants to make a decision to sell this company which has been profitable, then that is the choice of the Government. Of course, that is what it is here for. We on this side of the House have pointed out options with respect to why it should not choose to exercise that alternative.

However, if it is to move in this direction, after having made a clear decision to take the privatization route, then for goodness' sake let us have an infrastructure in keeping with that decision. Why not think of the workers? Why should they be left out of the equation? Why should their pension contributions be left simply to hang for some future discretionary measure within the Minister responsible? That is not the way business should be conducted when it involves the livelihood of people. It is unfair to say: "We will give them the benefit of one year to make up their minds whether or not they want to pursue the pension plan programs which we will be designing and offering them".

It should also be noted that this window of 12 months will begin once the legislation is passed. By the time the legislation passes, and by the time the Government introduces its Order in Council, it may very well be that 6, 8, 10 or 11 months will have passed. Therefore, that window by which an individual employee can make an intelligent decision for his family will be shortened. The one year, which might sound very attractive now, will, in fact, be watered down.

The Parliamentary Secretary laughs. Perhaps that is part of the problem. I do not think Members opposite are taking the issue as painted by the Public Service Alliance and the company seriously enough, and they have been siding on the part of the workers. Individuals in Treasury Board have been quoted in various journals and newspapers as having said that the Government has proceeded in a very unorganized and haphazard way, as far as pension contributions are concerned.

We are not trying to be obstructionist. We are not putting forward opposite views on how the Government should be proceeding simply because we are in opposition. We are doing so because there needs to be someone to speak for the workers in terms of this particular issue in order that their concerns be brought in and articulated. They have been trying to make their concerns known to the Government. This is why we are asking Members of the House to consider seriously Motion No. 2 put forward by my colleague. It is a fair and responsible amendment. It is one which speaks to the investment workers have made over the years and the one they wish to continue to make in future years. What is so wrong with that?

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, having very carefully studied the provisions of this Bill and after having examined with great care the motion which is now before the House—in fact, I believe there are two motions—

Mr. Boudria: There are three.

Mr. Robinson: My colleague tells me that there are three motions before the House which have been grouped together for debate. These motions certainly deal with some very fundamental issues which, in the course of my—is it 40 minutes I have, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It is 10 minutes.

Mr. Robinson: In the course of my 10-minute intervention on this fundamental question I wish to take the opportunity to address some of the concerns raised by these motions.

● (1430)

I had the opportunity of meeting with many of the workers of Canadian Arsenals who, as the House will know, were here on the Hill on Wednesday of this week. They expressed concerns with respect to the possibility that they might lose certain employee pension benefits. As we know, this is a fundamental issue of concern to these employees who have served Canadian Arsenals faithfully for many years.

The possible effect of the provisions of this Bill would be to seriously jeopardize the pension position of the employees of Canadian Arsenals. That is why we heard the chant on the steps of Parliament Hill: "*On veut la compensation, on veut la compensation!*" The compensation could amount to something in the order of \$17,000 per year to the individuals who have been affected by this legislation.

In examining the provisions of this Bill, I note that the Government, in the dying gasp of this debate, has put forward a motion which moves some distance toward meeting the concerns of the employees of Canadian Arsenals. However, I would like to support Motion No. 2, the motion that would permit employees of the corporation, as of the day prior to the date of the transfer of the company, to make an election. They could choose to remain as contributors to the federal superannuation plan, in which case they would be required to pay both the employee's and the employer's share of the required contributions to the plan, or they could accept the alternative of becoming a contributor to the pension plan as described in the Agreement of Purchase and Sale between the Government and the new employer. The fundamental issue here is that this would give the employees in question a choice. Obviously that would permit them to continue to protect the pension rights which have accrued to them through many years of faithful, loyal, dedicated and hardworking service to Canadian Arsenals.

We must ask why it is that the Government seems to be obsessed with the notion that the private sector can do things