

Investment Canada Act

considered, the case would be stronger. We all know that the House has been spinning its wheels because the Government has effectively had no legislation on the plate of Parliament. There is no pressure of stacked-up legislation; Parliament is not faced with a bottleneck. We have lots of time to consider these matters, but the Minister has decided that it is uncomfortable.

In the meantime, the Minister of Public Works (Mr. La Salle) has decided that it is equally uncomfortable for Parliament to have a handful of demonstrators outside seeking to communicate an opinion. This is a Government which promised openness and accessibility when its Members campaigned for office during the course of the election campaign last summer. Somehow what was promised then and what is being delivered now is very different. Like the Liberals who went before, they will be secretive and restrictive. They will restrain debate, take away the rights of citizens to come and protest, do things in a quiet way and try to prevent any sharing of information with respect to this particular Bill. If the Minister has a comment, I will listen.

We have tried to open up the process. We have tried to inject an element that the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion does not ride roughshod over Investment Canada without at least having the backing of his Cabinet. At least Motion No. 19 provides that Investment Canada will carry out the function of conducting reviews of investments by non-Canadians and will provide to other federal Departments and agencies information about means to stimulate investment by Canadians in Canada. Can anyone object to that kind of provision? Is the Minister really saying in opposing these amendments, as I believe he is, that he is opposed to measures to encourage investment in Canada by Canadians? Is that his position? From time to time that seems to be his position.

The Government came to power determined to do one thing in the economic sphere. It said it would open our doors to business around the world and that somehow that would get the Canadian economy moving. It will ignore the talent and initiative which exists among Canadians. Instead it will court by every means possible investment coming into this country. The Minister should know that there are too many examples of companies and foreign investors taking advantage of the Canadian openness that already exists in that particular regard.

I think of the way the Government and the people of Manitoba were treated by the promoters behind Churchill Forest Industries some 12 years or 15 years ago. Those promoters came in, took dollars away from Canada, took lots of profit away for themselves and left virtually nothing in return. That kind of history has been repeated again and again. I think of the way the rights of working people in Nova Scotia were trampled by the pressure of Michelin Tires when it twisted the arm of the Nova Scotia Government, until the point that that Government passed one of the most repressive anti-labour pieces of legislation the country has seen in order to prevent the workers at Michelin plants from having the

right to acquire a trade union. These kinds of things have happened many times.

The Minister will say that some good things have come out of foreign investment in Canada. I am sure that is the case as well. However, every other country recognizes that there must be pressures from Government to ensure that foreign capital acts responsibly and in the interests of the host country. Somehow I believe that this country is really no different.

● (1530)

We have consistently experienced Canadian initiative, invention and companies being restrained from developing products, from carrying out research and development and from developing markets in the United States because those companies or organizations were controlled by multinationals based in the United States. That, my friends, is the kind of thing that leads me to have grave misgivings regarding the degree to which the Government is bending over backward to accommodate foreign multinationals through the Investment Canada Bill. That is why we in the New Democratic Party believe it is important that we strengthen the powers of Investment Canada, and that the Bill puts at least as much emphasis on the encouragement of investment in Canada by Canadians as it does on the regulations and surveillance of investment in Canada by non-Canadians. That is the reason for the various amendments and that is why I believe this matter must be debated further.

I am adamantly and categorically opposed to the decision of the Minister who has simply gotten bored with listening. The Minister or his Parliamentary Secretary may have spent 80 hours in committee listening to people speak about these matters. But, as the Minister knows from his time in Cabinet and from his time in Opposition, it sometimes takes a long time before arguments made in the House of Commons begin to be heard by the people of Canada. That is why it is important that this debate continue. I would call on the Minister and the Government to withdraw the misguided decision to stifle debate in the House of Commons on this important Bill.

[*Translation*]

Hon. André Ouellet (Papineau): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise at this point of the debate to address not just the motion now before us, but also to reflect on the Minister's action which actually imposes closure on the bill.

I am not at all surprised at the Government's action, Mr. Speaker, because this is the second time the Progressive Conservative Government has imposed closure on this legislation. They did so through the Minister's Parliamentary Secretary on second reading, and now it is done once again, this time by the Minister himself, at report stage.

Canadians certainly will be surprised to see the impatient, high-handed ways used by this Government which given its overwhelming mandate, its overwhelming majority in this House, should not have to use such tactics, to use the guillotine