

Private Bills

are grossly overcharging us for our life insurance and then they lend the money back to us to assist us in buying our homes and to assist municipal, provincial and federal developments.

Therefore life insurance companies, in Canada in particular and, indeed, in the whole of North America, are increasingly becoming very important instruments in the whole field of investment. Just to reinforce this principle I should like to draw the attention of the house to the fact that at the end of 1960 the total assets of Canadian and foreign life insurance companies operating in Canada amounted to \$11,291,098,364. As I was saying, the tremendous income that comes to these organizations is reinvested, much of it within our own economy.

For example, if we look at the same year we find that life insurance companies in Canada held Canadian government bonds to the value of \$460,367,554. They held provincial bonds to the total value of \$719,497,593. They held local authorities bonds to the value of \$478,351,557, and they held mortgages on real estate to the value of \$2,872,334,230. In these four fields alone their total holdings of Canadian assets amounted to \$4,530,450,944. I am suggesting to the house, Mr. Speaker, that as these life insurance companies encroach more and more and get greater and greater control of the assets of Canada, something must be done about them. I am suggesting to the members of the house that this is probably a good place to start.

It is socially unwise for us, as Canadians, to permit this continued foreign domination. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, if one examines the record it becomes clear there is a trend taking place towards increasing ownership of our insurance companies from outside of Canada. The first Canadian life insurance company went under foreign control in 1929. From that time nothing happened until 1957. Since 1957, seven more have passed under foreign control and four new ones have been incorporated. Of our life insurance companies in Canada, 12 are under foreign control. As a Canadian I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that this is an unwise policy, a dangerous policy, and one which should not be pursued further. Indeed, the very problem that this bill raises also raises the greatest single problem facing all Canadians, that is the dangerous tendency for large sections of our economy to pass under foreign ownership. It is a problem that has been discussed in this house and of which all hon. members are aware. The government has indicated its concern, as have the members of all parties.

I am suggesting to the house that we must begin at some time to take steps on the road back to becoming masters of our own house, controllers of our own destiny, to have direction of our own economy and ownership of our own resources. I am suggesting this is the time to begin. I know this is a small company and it is just getting going. I have watched its record in the car insurance business. With its high publicity and its low operating cost, it has quite large sales through Simpsons-Sears. The low rates attract a great deal of business. As the years go by, this company will grow in size, will become increasingly powerful, will have a greater and greater amount of Canadian investments under its control. These assets will be controlled from outside of Canada.

I am suggesting that is a bad policy. I am suggesting to the house we should reject this bill because of it. We should begin today, here, this afternoon, on this second reading, to take a stand supporting the idea of ownership and control of Canadian assets inside our borders. This will not be easy. It will be a long and difficult role. I believe all parties in the house must become honest with the Canadian people about the difficulties of this approach and the sacrifices we will have to make as well as the hard, personal decisions that will be involved. But I feel, Mr. Speaker, that a vote on this bill is not a vote of no confidence in the government or anybody else; it is a vote of confidence in the Canadian people themselves. Therefore, I move:

That the word "now" be left out and the words "this day six months hence" be added at the end of the question.

Hon. J. W. Pickersgill (Bonavista-Twillin-gate): Mr. Speaker, before this question is put to the house I should like to say a word about its effect. Under the rules of the house, as I understand them, when we are considering a public bill we are considering the principle of the bill during a debate on second reading. In the case of a private bill, that is not the rule. In the case of private bills, we are really, according to my views which I know will not be shared by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) or the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), just permitting the bills to get to the committee where their principle and everything else about them can be examined. In other words, we do not generally take up the time of the house to debate these private bills.

I am not suggesting for a minute that the hon. gentleman's motion is out of order. Of course, it is quite in order, as I understand it. However, I say what we would be doing if we voted for the amendment would be prejudging these questions before we have ever