

pleasure to come to the end of this debate, frankly, because the debate has been an exercise in fallacious arguments and in trying to push through, in an arrogant fashion, what can only be considered irresponsible legislation. I hope, after the Bill is finally shoved through the House, that there will be some return to civility on the part of the Government.

● (1210)

I actually hesitated to intervene in the debate this morning because I expected that somehow out of the rafters of the House the ghost-like voices of Sir John A. Macdonald and John Diefenbaker would be heard. I can almost hear their voices now. I can hear Mr. Diefenbaker, with jowls shaking, looking down in concern at the Government and seeing its vision—this new vision for Canada of a stepping-stone society. The national policy of John A. Macdonald has become a stepping-stone economy of the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens).

I believe that tells us what this historic debate has actually brought us to in the House of Commons. I think back to the initial press conference of the Minister quite some time ago and his idle prediction that within two or three months the legislation he proposed would be law. It is not law. First, it is not law—and I am explaining here why we have fought it so strongly—because it is a deeply flawed, dangerous and irresponsible Bill born not out of the concerns and needs of the economy but, rather, out of ideological myth. It is a Bill shaped not to suit the modern conditions and challenges which the economy faces but, instead, the whims of a reactionary Minister.

It is a Bill which has been supported by fallacious and irrelevant arguments of which we just recently had an example with respect to the statistics brought before us today. We have heard arguments which have been designed to obscure what the Bill is attempting to do, as opposed to confronting the serious problems our country faces and trying to do something about them. For the Conservative Government of the country, the arguments surrounding the Bill have been an exercise in propaganda, not an exercise in honesty. The Bill before us has been driven through the House with insensitivity and a type of autocratic arrogance and pride which has made the whole process unhappy, graceless and an insult to the parliamentary traditions of the country. It has been the process typical of a bully, not of an economic leader.

I wish to say how pleased and proud I am of the New Democratic caucus. In its struggle, that caucus has helped to keep the Bill before us from becoming law. I am pleased about that for two reasons. First, as a result of that action, certain takeovers in the country have been subjected to the process of review under FIRA. Had the Bill been in place, they might not have been subjected to a review at all, or to a much weakened process of review.

I am reminded specifically of the workers from Canadian Porcelain who met with the Minister this morning to ask that he intervene and see to it that their community-based co-operative would have a chance to realize its hopes and aspirations

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within their community. These workers would not have found it possible to look for redress had we not delayed the Bill, which gave them a chance under the provisions of FIRA. Second, I think it important that the Bill be seen now as part of a broader Conservative economic strategy—an economic strategy which the Budget has brought out clearly to the people of Canada. It is a strategy based on providing hand-outs, and all sorts of abject support, to foreign investors, speculators and the large oil companies of the country. These are the people who have received the benefits. The people who have paid the price have been the pensioners, the women who looked for action in the Budget and received none and the youth of the country who looked for job expansion and found nothing.

The Bill before us is part of the huge and mighty redistribution which the Government wants to see put in place. It is a redistribution which will hurt the vast majority of the country while helping the foreign investors of whom the Minister speaks. However, this will occur at the expense of our people, our small-businessmen, our young people and pensioners. It will come about at the expense of those who have borne the burdens of raising us all, those who provided the economic support with which the country was built. The flaws, errors and omissions in the Bill before us are truly outstanding.

The Bill before us illustrates an exercise in draftmanship which, frankly, leaves one standing appalled. There are loopholes in the Bill through which it will be possible to drive not just locomotives but dirigibles. There are loopholes in the Bill which will permit the takeover of a branch plant of a branch of an American company without any review process whatsoever. The Bill does not provide for review of branches, just of subsidiaries. There are loopholes in the Bill which do not even allow for the definition of the asset level which is to be considered for purposes of the threshold in the Bill. Again, it will create a field day for lawyers who will be able to make use of that piece of inadvertent or, perhaps, intentional, disaster which is built into the Bill.

It is a Bill which provides new power for the Minister. What I have referred to as the octopus of Canada will have yet one more tentacle over which the minister will have control. It is a Bill which speaks of promoting investment in Canada; yet, it does not have a single specific recommendation within it to extend and support Canadian-owned business. We attempted to remedy that by putting forward an amendment which dealt with a specific mandate for the Minister to assist Canadian-controlled businesses. It is the New Democratic Party which supports Canadian business, not the Members who sit on the government benches. Of course, the Conservative majority voted down that amendment.

The Bill before us has thresholds so high that important enterprises in key communities across the country will no longer be able to turn to Government for the type of bargaining support on takeovers which should be in place. It is a Bill which has rejected important and useful suggestions for new criteria to be looked at in trying to assess net benefit. Unbelievably, the Conservative majority in committee who