

Investment Canada Act

● (1150)

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Richelieu): I should like to point out to my colleague that if he intends to speak about the Progressive Conservatives in his constituency, as a Progressive Conservative member, I intend to speak about some Liberal members and especially him. I am told that the Progressive Conservatives are quite bright people. They do their homework seriously instead of shouting as the Liberal member is now doing. And it is not with shouts or with charges of inaction that this country will be soundly administered. In that respect, I have been receiving complaints in my constituency and I am asked: What are they doing? And they refer to that well-known statement of Mr. Mulroney who said: "The clowns of the Liberal party are not all gone."

[English]

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I intervene again on Bill C-15 and the amendments to Clause 6. The reason for our Motion No. 20 is very obvious. We think there should be some separation between the Minister and the agency. We believe we should not give the Minister the authority to make judgments. We have a good basis for our feeling of insecurity about giving the Minister that kind of power. Consequently, we moved this particular motion which would eliminate, as far as possible, the kind of control and power that is given to the Minister by this Bill.

If we were to look at the long-term Tory position we would find first that there is not that much difference between the present Tory position and the past Liberal position, although the periphery of that position is being defended very strongly these days. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) said that he would put FIRA on the back burner and would establish a new screening process, and that looked as though it might be a good idea. However, we now find that the screening process is made up of a pretty big net through which everything can fall.

● (1200)

I would like to quote from a statement by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn). He said:

Let us look at foreign investment. The test now is whether that investment is of significant benefit to Canada. I say, Mr. Speaker, that almost every investment in Canada is a benefit to Canada—We do not need to turn it off—What we must do as part of our industrial strategy is to remove the shackles put on foreign investment.

We need to have another strategy, Mr. Speaker, a strategy of hands off.

That is the Tory policy as far as investment in Canada is concerned. It is unfortunate.

Over the years the policy has changed considerably. It seems that the Conservative Party has taken on the mantle of C. D. Howe, the mantle of unfettered continentalism, in opening the doors to investment, particularly investment from the United States. I wonder what the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker would say, if he were listening to this debate, with respect to the policy of the present Conservative Government. I wonder what John A. Macdonald would say if he was listening to this

debate and hearing what the Conservatives are attempting to do by removing FIRA and any inhibitions to foreign investment in Canada. I can imagine what Mr. Diefenbaker would say. He would be on the floor of the House every minute of the day saying that this policy would make Canada the fifty-first state of the United States. We do not trust the policy and, therefore, we believe that making it difficult for the Minister to have these powers under the Bill is worth-while.

Motion No. 19, which would also amend Clause 6 of the Bill, is an attempt to have more Canadianization. Nothing could be better. This Party knows, as does the Government, that the net amount of investment in Canada during the last 25 years has been negative. More Canadian money has been invested outside Canada than has been invested by foreigners in Canada. More money has left Canada in research and development, profits and interest than has come into Canada during the last 25 years. If the Government wants to establish Canadianization, it should look at investment and turn it around. It should not increase foreign investment, because it has a domino effect. The more investment, ownership and money which foreign companies have in Canada, the more they will spend increasing the size of their companies. Those foreign companies will become larger and expand into other areas. Canadianization over the years has had some impetus as far as the Government is concerned, but this Bill will turn that entirely around. Canadian nationalism will no longer be a basis for development in Canada.

I spent a number of years in Nigeria. That country is considered to be part of the Third World. At that time the Government of Nigeria was what we in Canada would call a benevolent despot; it had a military government. However, Nigeria had the courage to realize that if it was going anywhere, it had to own Nigeria. That Government put into place a Nigerianization policy, which allowed it to take over small businesses and large corporations. Nigeria did that, even though it was having problems maintaining its status as a democracy. The people in that Government had the courage, foresight and understanding of foreign ownership which enabled them to eliminate, as far as possible, foreign ownership of Nigeria's businesses and industries.

For example, the Nigerian policy dictated that any industry which was worth under 400,000 naira had to be owned and operated entirely by Nigerians. Nigeria gave those companies two years to find Nigerians buyers. If no buyer was found, those companies would be closed down and Nigerians would take over. The same policy existed for large corporations. The Nigerian policy dictated that within a certain amount of time a major portion of the shareholders of the companies had to be Nigerian.

Canada is a much more sophisticated and developed country than Nigeria, but it is unable to control investment in Canada. In fact, this Government thinks that the more investment, the better. The Government thinks that the closer Canada gets to the United States, the better, and the more the U.S. owns in Canada, the better. The idea of Canada becoming the fifty-first state of the United States must be looked at very closely.