

International Conventions

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: The questions enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary have been answered. Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ACT RESPECTING INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

MEASURE TO AVOID DOUBLE TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Bussières (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill S-2, to implement conventions between Canada and Spain, Canada and the Republic of Liberia, Canada and the Republic of Austria, Canada and Italy, Canada and the Republic of Korea, Canada and the Socialist Republic of Roumania and Canada and the Republic of Indonesia and agreements between Canada and Malaysia, Canada and Jamaica and Canada and Barbados and a convention between Canada and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the avoidance of double taxation with respect to income tax, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Bussières (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill S-2 be read the third time and do pass.

[English]

Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for letting me for once speak first on third reading.

Mr. Knowles: It gives you unlimited time.

Mr. Rae: I have unlimited time, Madam Speaker, but I can assure you that I do not intend to use it on this occasion. Unfortunately, one only gets the chance to use unlimited time on those occasions when one does not want to use it.

However, I want to indicate to the minister and to the House some of our concerns with respect to these particular treaties and the process which the government is engaged in at the present time. Perhaps as an introduction I can say to the minister that we on this side are concerned about other treaties which we feel should be given equal status and equal importance by the government with respect to relations between Canada and other countries. I am thinking, in particular, of the lack of pension and social security agreements with a number of countries. This causes us a great deal of concern. I know the government has entered into an agreement with the

government of Italy. I know that this reciprocal social security arrangement is one which works to the advantage of Italians who have come to Canada, and it works to the advantage of Canadian citizens who have returned to their native country.

I can repeat to the minister and the government that it is a subject which gives us tremendous concern. It causes great hardship to Canadian citizens and to landed immigrants from many other countries. I know from discussions I have had with ministers of the government of Greece, when I was in Greece in September, that the question of a social security treaty between the government of Greece and the Government of Canada is a matter of great importance to the government of Greece. It has taken them some effort to finally get the Government of Canada to recognize that this is a legitimate claim. I add that if it is a legitimate claim for the government of Greece then it is of legitimate concern for the government of the United Kingdom and many other countries where travel between us is such a way of life. It is so important, particularly for senior citizens who are coming to Canada to join their families, to transfer their payments readily and to receive the same kind of security and the same type of dignity which we want extended to all our citizens. Concerns and hardships are created by many people having to wait ten years in Canada until, in many cases, they reach the age of 75 or even 80 before they are eligible for a Canadian pension. This is a concern which causes a great deal of hardship to senior citizens who were not born in Canada.

I say to the minister that this is a subject which we regard with the same importance as the signing of tax treaties. I am well aware that the pressure to sign tax treaties comes, as it does, from our largest multinational corporations and it is one that the Liberal government is so ready to listen to. Those louder voices receive greater priority at the cabinet table than the voices on behalf of pensions and social security.

● (1220)

As I have said in private conversations, in correspondence with the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), on many occasions in question period, and through a motion under Standing Order 43, we regard the signing of social security treaties as a matter of great importance and, indeed, of greater immediate urgency than some of the tax treaties which have been put before us. Bill S-2 contains a number of treaties with a number of countries—Austria, Barbados, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Malaysia, Roumania, South Korea, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

The alleged purpose of these tax treaties is to avoid double taxation and to ensure that companies and private individuals—although we are dealing here mainly with corporate taxation—who have business arrangements in these countries will not be taxed twice for the same income, that is, they will not be taxed once in the foreign country and once in Canada. If that were the only question raised by these treaties, one could hardly object to them, but unfortunately the problem of tax treaties, international corporate taxes, and the avoidance