

Canada Corporations Act

Members on all sides of the House very often receive representations from companies who say that they are working overtime in order to provide statistics for the government and to fill government files. They say they are continually being asked to file too many statistics. They find themselves working longer hours in order to provide this data. I believe it can be said that government curiosity quite often leads to government interference. This legislation will also mean an increase in the number of civil servants.

Many other practical problems will arise should this legislation come into force. I believe there should be unification in respect of legislation. The minister is asking for reports from corporate companies. We find that already our provincial governments have enacted legislation asking for similar information. Regrettably, however, the information asked for is not always the same. The requirements in respect of disclosure apply to many corporations governed by the Canada Corporations Act. In order to avoid confusion on the part of shareholders and the investing public in general, maintain administrative efficiency and avoid multiplicity and duplication of costly returns, I think the minister would be wise not to bring into force these particular amendments until the legislation respecting disclosure is uniform throughout Canada.

The provisions in clause 16 relating to section 120A of the act should not be proceeded with until similar provisions are in effect in all provinces and in respect of all companies doing business in any part of the western world; otherwise, a company falling under federal legislation would be placed in a most disadvantageous position vis-à-vis its competitors. If these companies were required to give such information, their foreign competitors would know a great deal about their business and there would be a tendency toward more takeovers of Canadian companies than has been the case in the past. These are some of the observations under the heading of practical problems as I see them.

There is also a principle involved here. I think this policy involves an invasion of privacy. I do not think the information being asked for is necessary in all cases. I realize the minister said that this provision would be applicable only with respect to companies with sales or assets in the amount of \$3 million or over, but is there any guarantee that it will not be amended later to reduce the figure to \$2 million and then to \$1 million?

[Mr. Hales.]

Is there any guarantee that in time the government will not choose to have the affairs of Joe Smith Limited published, and will later suggest the same thing for plain Joe Smith? In respect of private companies or businesses owned by members of a family or by an individual, where there is no prospect of extending share ownership to others, I suggest that if the act is amended to require this type of information to be filed it will constitute a gross invasion of privacy which in no way serves the public good. When the committee studies the bill it should look into this matter very thoroughly.

• (3:50 p.m.)

This bill contains some drastic amendments. It must not be taken too lightly and skipped over. I hope that when it comes before the committee, many of these companies and corporations will appear before it and prove to the minister and the committee that some of the amendments are too drastic and are not in the best interests of our country.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, when the government house leader was speaking on the radio the other evening he said that it was the business of the government to bring forward legislation, and of the opposition to criticize and pass it. However, the government house leader left out the fact that if the government did not bring forward the legislation which seemed to the opposition to be important and of top priority, the opposition must speak about the legislation that should have been introduced and was not.

I think that perhaps the reason for a good many of the speeches on this bill on our side is that we feel that the type of thoroughgoing and strong legislation that should be introduced by the government in this session, dealing with problems affecting consumers, has not been introduced. Consequently, we have to deal with measures which are inadequate, and with the government's sins of omission rather than their sins of commission. Of course, we get a swipe at the sins of commission in passing, but their sins of omission are much greater.

I think when this legislation first appeared it came as a great shock to many people across our country to learn that under the Canada Corporations Act the only federally-incorporated companies required to file financial statements with the department are