

Foreign Takeovers Review Act

pass as quickly as possible in order to enable it to operate for the benefit of our country.

Hon. Marcel Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, we are beginning today in this House a debate which has been raging for years, with varying degrees of intensity, outside this chamber—in universities, in high schools, in newspaper columns, on television. From time to time we have heard certain strident, shrill voices describe this problem of foreign ownership as though it were peculiarly Canadian—la plaie Canadienne. Not a bit of it. Look at what has happened in Britain since the Second World War. One has only to read the book by Serven Schriever to understand the problems presented by foreign ownership in France.

• (2050)

One sees that each of these countries has adopted various methods to try to keep a reasonable grip on things. I find it rather ludicrous that many people make shrill cries about improper behaviour and the improper or almost immoral nature of foreign ownership, while on the other hand they want Canadian firms to go abroad and do business. What is there about Canadians going abroad? Are they like St. George, pure of heart? Let somebody from Great Britain, a German, a Frenchman or an American come to Canada and he is accused of being a conniving, scheming individual about to depose Canadians. This is ludicrous.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) was hopeful when putting forward his mistaken tax bill. We have not yet reached this point because as a good deal has to be done in the way of amending the international, industrial part of the bill. But hopefully the Minister of Finance will be successful in getting Canadian firms to move abroad and compete. How will they compete? By standing offshore and firing long-distance cannons? Of course they cannot do that. They must go ashore, into foreign countries and establish subsidiaries, partnerships or some other form of business enterprise.

One is almost tempted to say that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If we as Canadians want to get out and carry on what is vital to our economy—that is, our export business—we must go to other countries and establish connections. I am sure the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) during his almost quarterly peregrinations to Japan has been urging the Japanese to open up opportunities for Canadian investment in that country.

I am sure he has been asking them to relax the long list of conditions in respect of industries in Japan which have been closed over the years to all foreign participation. He is not doing this just for the pleasure of doing it but so that Canadian businessmen can establish healthy working relationships for trade with the Japanese and other Pacific countries. All this is an attempt to guarantee Canadian jobs. Where do all these people around la plaie Canadienne, with their shrill cries about foreign ownership, think jobs will come from if firms have to close down and Canadian industry is dormant?

It was highly amusing this afternoon to listen to the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) go through the litany

[Mr. Blair.]

of hamstringing operations that Canadian industry encounters, each one of which adds more and more to the cost of production so that even in the domestic market they cannot compete unless one imposes controls and rationing or so-called economic reduction. Let us consider the doctrinaire straitjacket imposed on Britain after the war. I experienced three years of it, and I assure you it was sheer hell and agony. I have in mind the economic reduction imposed by Sir Stafford Cripps. There were rules, regulations and restrictions, with everything directed by him.

With democracy in Canada—and I will not refer to individuals—many people say the proportion of people employed by government is far too high. But if we had to follow even half the suggestions put forward by the NDP this afternoon, the size of the national civil service would be more than doubled. There would be no problems of unemployment, I suppose, but everybody would become an official shuffling papers. Everybody would be engaged in so-called economic reduction. That is one aspect of the problem. Of course, the NDP has its Waffle wing.

Mr. Paproski: Stanley Knowles!

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): No, I will not accuse the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) of being a member of the Waffle group, because that is not possible.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The hon. member may think I am awful, but I am not “a-waffle.”

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): I will accuse the hon. member of all sorts of things, but not of that. We have another organization composed of sincere people, I suppose. I refer to the Committee for an Independent Canada. They are all good and well intentioned people. They have members from the NDP, members who are pseudo-Liberals and a former Liberal who I suppose could be referred to as the financial Moses of the Liberal party, Walter Gordon. That former hon. member for Danforth, when he was minister of finance ten years ago brought us a great deal of trouble with his 30 per cent takeover tax. If we look at the problems of today and consider some of their historical aspects, we will see that a good deal of foreign ownership in this country started in those days.

I do not want to go too far back in the memories of hon. members, but the institution of the British preferential tariff wall within the Commonwealth formed one of the earlier trading blocs. Our United States friends established French subsidiaries in Canada in order to get within that British preferential tariff wall. That was perhaps good business at the time. But has anyone been studying what is happening in France and in Germany? Does anyone know what is going to happen in Britain and elsewhere within the common market? Canadians and Americans have been establishing plants in these countries in order to get within that high common market tariff wall.

Why did Polymer go over to France years ago? I use that as an example of only one industry, but each one that went to France did so because of foreign ownership. They are having troubles in France because of foreign owner-