

I do not think it helps the people of Canada when they listen to reports from this House and hear members repeating over and over again the suggestion that this government or governments in the future will never do anything else about foreign takeovers or about foreign ownership in Canada, because those matters are undoubtedly the subject of continuing interest to the people of Canada and will be to governments which serve in this House of Commons.

I want to say something about the suggestion of the hon. member for Assiniboia that the government has not listened to any of the suggestions made by those who appeared before the committee or to any opposition amendments, and the government has been completely adamant on this subject. Let me remind the hon. member that the Committee for an Independent Canada suggested there should be a change in the presumption level. The Hon. Walter Gordon, who spoke as a representative of the Committee for an Independent Canada, came before the committee and made the representation, among others, that the percentage levels at which presumption of foreign ownership should be considered and screened should be raised. We had an amendment before the committee which would allow for that. I refer to the amendment to clause 3(2) which deals specifically with that point.

An hon. Member: That is another proposal which is half pregnant.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): There were proposals from the provinces in Canada gleaned from a discussion between the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Gray) and the provincial governments across Canada that there should be better machinery for consultation with the provinces. There was an amendment included to allow for that provision. I find it strange indeed that members of the NDP should try to prevent the government taking action in the area of direct foreign investment.

An hon. Member: Stick to the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I remind the parliamentary secretary that his remarks are perhaps a little away from the amendment before us. He himself commented about other speakers not keeping to the amendment. He should try to keep his remarks relevant.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, in keeping to the subject of the bill, if I am to reply to hon. members who themselves did not refer to the bill or the amendment, I shall find it difficult to make comments of specific relevance. At any rate, I am very close to concluding my remarks.

I was saying that it is very strange the NDP should try to prevent government action in the area of direct foreign investment in order to bring about substantial benefits to Canada. I thought about this today as I listened to the debate, and concluded that there are only two possible reasons that party could have for adopting such a course of action. The first is that they have involved themselves so much in the airy-fairy world of political theories they must devise some kind of policy to fit those esoteric theo-

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ries. The only other alternative I can think of is that this is sheer political opportunism on their part.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): I realize that this thought is furthest from their minds and it is a shame I should even suggest such a thing. However, the NDP has talked about many lofty objectives. These hon. members have talked about many things, but because they have talked so much they have clearly shown they want to continue to talk, but do nothing.

Mr. Thomas S. Barnett (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to my colleague from British Columbia, the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Howard), chide the members of this party for having taken some time to consider the subject of clause 2 of the bill. At the outset of his remarks he made some rather high-sounding references to the maintenance of democracy and that sort of thing, and suggested that this subject matter had been fully discussed.

I am not quite sure what he meant when he was referring to the subject matter, but it came to my mind that if he was talking about concern for the survival of Canada as an independent economic, political, social and cultural entity, there has been quite a bit of discussion on this topic over a period of time. In fact, I was reminded that some time ago my first year essay—I think the hon. member made some reference to academic discourse—as a freshman student at the University of British Columbia, was entitled “The Americanization of Canadian life”, or words to that effect.

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It is true to say that both before and since the time I wrote that essay, this issue has been a matter of concern to many Canadian people. Unfortunately, it does not appear to have been a very great concern to most governments which have been in power in Canada since that day in my youth when I wrote the essay. I am sorry that I do not have it with me and cannot read it into the record.

If one were to put the subject matter of the hon. member's remarks into the context of the current Parliament, and remembered in so doing that he speaks as a member who supports the government of the day, who serves as parliamentary secretary to one of the ministers of the Crown in the cabinet, one would realize that it ill behooves him to talk about lengthy debate and discussion on this subject, particularly with reference to any government proposals on the matter. To put it mildly, the hon. member has a lot of gall to complain that the day has been spent on the consideration of this bill in what, probably, is the final session of this Parliament, in light of the fact that the government he supports has sat on its fanny for the last four years and has done absolutely nothing about the problem.

I do not need to remind the hon. member, surely, because he does spend some time in the House, that the members of this party have persistently during every session of this Parliament questioned the government about when they would be prepared to follow through some of the indications of action that they tried to give the