

[English]

**Mr. Tobin:** I do not know what she said, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest):** For the information of the Hon. Member for Humber-Port au Port-St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin), the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mrs. Tardif) said that the Hon. Member's speech was not relevant to the subject matter of the amendments brought forward on Bill C-15. The common denominator with which we are confronted here is public accountabilities on the amendments.

**Mr. Tobin:** I assure the Hon. Member that the people of the northern peninsula are relevant. When we talk about the possibility of foreign investors coming in and picking up piecemeal the fish plants and the operations on that northern peninsula, and consigning them forever to the life of a serf to a foreign master in a foreign boardroom, they are relevant. That is the bloody problem with those people across the way; they see everything in the urban context of the boardrooms and the free enterprise speech that they are born and bred with. They forget about the people of Canada who live in resource sensitive areas. They are relevant. I reject any notion that the people of the northern peninsula are not as relevant to this speech as the people of Toronto, Calgary or Vancouver. You are damn right they are relevant, and that is the bloody problem, Mr. Speaker.

There are a number of resource industries in the country, whether it is the fishery, the forestry or primary production, that we do not see in the cities. They are out there doing a day's work. They are very susceptible to a Bill which will allow foreign investment to come in and cherry pick, to take the very best fish plants and forestry operations, and to leave the rest for the Government of Canada to subsidize.

We want a consolidated resource development policy which recognizes the long-term best interests of the people in the communities where they live. If we have a Bill which allows foreign investment to come in for under \$5 million and make a purchase with no scrutiny, of course these people are relevant. Not only that, when there is an assessment, it is kept secret so that no one knows whether it is good or bad. Of course they are relevant. That is why they came to Ottawa. They had to come all the way here to be heard because the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (Mr. Fraser) would not go to the great northern peninsula. That is the problem, that kind of narrow-minded attitude or that kind of boardroom mentality which says that profits at any cost are more important than people. I reject that philosophy.

I support the NDP motion. We are not so partisan that we do not support a good motion when we see one. This motion simply asks that when an assessment is made, the people affected have the right to see that assessment and have a chance to determine for themselves whether a particular foreign investment is good or bad.

In the case of communities as great, as wonderful and as historic as New Ferrolle, Green Island Brook and St. Anthony on the great northern peninsula, Bill C-15, which gives unbi-

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dled authority to foreign investment to come in and take the best of what is offered and leave the people with the rest, is unacceptable.

**Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert):** Mr. Speaker, again I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Bill C-15. The present Government when in opposition made unending pleas for openness in Government and for the opportunity for Members of the House to criticize what the Government was putting before the people. Therefore, it is surprising that the Government now in power is not willing to support the openness or freedom of information which is involved in the series of motions presently before the House.

While in opposition the late Hon. Walter Baker, whom my colleague quoted a few minutes ago, made probably one of the strongest pleas in the House for openness in government. I should like to quote a paragraph from that speech. He stated:

—if the people of the country are to be able to judge in a knowledgeable way, then some of the tools of power must be shared. One of the great tools of power is not only the ability to probe all the structures within this place, but also to have the knowledge by which that probing, that investigation, that calling to account of a government, can be done effectively based on information and knowledge rather than instinct.

The late Hon. Walter Baker hit the nail on the head. The people of Canada need information to be available. The economy of the country is dependent upon that information, and a judgment can be made with the tools available to the people.

• (1540)

During the committee hearings, a number of witnesses made reference to the need for openness in this Bill. The one who made the most telling plea for openness was a former commissioner of FIRA, Mr. Gorse Howarth. He had a great deal of experience working with the need to control investment in Canada. When he appeared before the committee he criticized the past FIRA Bill, which I also want to put before this House. He said, and I quote:

The most telling criticism, certainly the most telling criticism as far as I was concerned, was that the whole process was conducted in secrecy.—The truth of the matter is that the way Parliament wrote that law, the Government and the agency had no choice but to keep virtually everything concealed and hidden.

As far as I can see, that is going to happen under the proposed new law, as it is now written. The requirements for confidentiality are no less stringent. Virtually all the information which was classified by Parliament under the Foreign Investment Review Act as privileged is classified as privileged under the proposed new Act. And if that is indeed to be the pattern, then Parliament and the Government and the agency and everyone can expect, sooner or later, after the first blush of happiness and so on has gone, that there will be the same kind of criticism that this whole process is being conducted in a secretive manner. There will be more criticism, perhaps, because this Government, as I understand it, is committed to making things more open to the public.

The previous Minister, the Hon. Walter Baker, would have appreciated that statement. He probably would have said that that is exactly what his Government intends to do, but he would have been wrong. The Government has put into this Bill the same kind of secrecy as was in the former Bill, not giving the people of Canada an opportunity to look at the factors which go into the making of a decision.