

there is a wide level of sensitivity toward regional development, where there is a level of sensitivity to the performance and behaviour of foreign investment in this country, and, perhaps most seriously, on the question of who gets approval and who does not.

This Bill as it is presently constructed contains perhaps the most wide-ranging powers ever given to a Minister to make decisions dealing with billions of dollars worth of investment without being accountable to anyone, not to his own Cabinet, not to Parliament. In fact, the Minister is not accountable to anyone. This naturally leads to the suspicion of or concern about favouritism. Who gets the approval? There is no way of determining some other form of judgment, of determining the legitimacy, accuracy or relevancy of that decision, because there is no way of finding out. The Minister does not report back to Parliament. He does not report back to his own Cabinet. He does not report to anybody, and all he consults is his own peculiar and convoluted set of judgments.

Surely we have seen evidence in the past month or two of how dangerous a trend that could be, even for Members on the Government side. May I remind Hon. Members of the problem of Domtar. The Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens) made a decision relating to total cancellation of any support for the Domtar proposal in the Province of Quebec, which affected hundreds of jobs in a very depressed area of the province. It was only through the incredible weight of opposition brought after the fact by local people, by members of this Opposition Party and by others that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), who is well known for his sensitivity to heat—in other words, he cannot take it—

Mrs. Maily: Nonsense.

Mr. Axworthy:—immediately turned to his Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion and told him to change his mind.

What we are facing under this kind of Bill is a constant sort of post *ad hoc* set of responses and reactions against a Minister who has shown he has no sensitivity to regional development. No one has any confidence in his ability to make judgments that will result in effective distribution of economic benefits in different parts of Canada.

The gentleman who was responsible for that wonderful failure of the institution called the Bank of Western Canada—we in the West remember the now Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion's record in western Canada—we know how sensitive to western Canada he was in his previous incarnation. We are giving him incredible powers to make decisions, yet he reports to no one.

● (1200)

The intent of our amendments is clear. We believe the Bill should include a provision in no uncertain terms indicating that the Minister is responsible for seeking out Canadian investors when businesses are up for sale or acquisitions are under way. I point to the example of the major take-over by Chevron, a United States oil and gas company, of Gulf

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Canada, a \$2 billion deal. Under FIRA there was a clear undertaking that that company had to try to sell off Gulf Canada to ensure the Canadianization of the oil and gas industry. The Minister responsible has taken no role whatsoever. He has simply washed his hands of it. We are within two days of meeting the deadline, and there is no Canadian buyer and there seems to be no action on behalf of the Government. Therefore, there seems to be no accountability under that Act on the part of the Minister.

One of our amendments clearly sets out that it is the responsibility of the Minister to seek out Canadian investors for those businesses so that Parliament can judge him by those actions. There is nothing in the Bill which requires him to do that. Although he can say that he will do it, it must be within the legislation. I do not think anyone here can take ministerial statements on faith in that in the short life of this Government we have already seen that it does not live up to its commitments. Such statements are not realizable unless there is clear responsibility within the legislation.

Equally we felt that part of the purpose of this amendment was to ensure that the Minister responsible would consult, when there is a take-over or acquisition bid, with the communities and regions affected by it, to ensure that a foreign buyer will not come into a one-industry town, buy up the industry and strip it of its employment. My colleague from Newfoundland spoke about the danger this morning of having many factories, mines or enterprises closed down and the employees and communities being left holding the bag. Our amendment tries to put forward a clear responsibility and accountability for the Minister to consult with them and to meet regional responsibilities.

Our Government established the Industrial Labour Adjustment Program, which was an attempt to recognize that in the event of industrial change, lay-offs, or change in technology, the federal Government in partnership with local businesses and local communities would negotiate, consult and work out a plan of action to meet the problem. We have no commitment from the Government in this regard. In fact, it is closing down ILAP. It has no interest in or response to the problem of industrial change. When representatives of the Economic Conference Board appeared before the committee, they recognized that one of the major consequences of foreign investment was job loss, job reduction, job change. However, there is nothing in the Bill to provide assurance to the communities affected by the changes that their interests will be taken into account. When it comes time for Parliament to judge the actions of the Minister, he can say that under the Investment Canada Act it was not his responsibility. This is why we feel it is very important to have written into the legislation clear and undeniable responsibility on the part of the Minister to meet regional needs, to consult with the regions and to be responsive to any job change or industrial change encountered as a result of a foreign take-over, so that when it comes time for Parliament to hold up the Minister's record of stewardship we will have a clear basis for judgment.