

ment of Canada under the Investment Canada Bill should be subject to review.

● (1120)

Mitel gets the publicity because it is a large company. However, there are hundreds of smaller high tech firms in Canada that will be totally vulnerable and unprotected under Investment Canada. Did the Minister pay any attention to that warning from the Science Council? Did he pay any attention to the representations made at committee that in such a critical area to economic growth in Canada there should be at least a requirement for a review of those companies? The Minister said no, let the foreign companies come in and take over because his Government believes that is a virtue.

That amendment was not brought in because we wanted to confront the Minister and the Government. We were not opposing the principle of the Bill. We were offering to improve it and make it better in an attempt to deal with this matter.

Similarly, in the case of book publishing, we brought in amendments to the House that clearly indicated a desire to have Parliament establish the criteria upon which reviews will take place in the cultural industry. Let us not have it subject to regulation that can be shifted on the whim and caprice of orders in council. Our amendment would have Parliament establish the criteria so that it would be clearly understood by those in our economy, including the cultural groups and publishing groups, that this is in fact the parliamentary sanction. Once again, the Minister said he had no business with that because his interest really is keeping power unto himself. There is a clear disregard for Parliament in these actions and a clear interest in maintaining his own arbitrary, discretionary powers without reference to anyone else.

The Investment Canada Bill is severely flawed because it gives the Minister total and complete power without any accountability for his decisions to anybody else. He is not required to answer to Parliament, to the committee or even to his own Cabinet.

Mr. Stevens: Not true. Why can't you stick to the truth?

Mr. Axworthy: He has no accountability whatsoever in these areas.

We introduced an amendment that would allow for this accountability in order to maintain some kind of balance in this area. Was there any willingness to consider these amendments or any willingness to debate? The Conservative Members sat in their places and would not debate the issue. Instead, the Government introduced closure.

Not only are the Conservatives not willing to administer the Government, they are not prepared to engage in the give and take of parliamentary exchange through the parliamentary process. They do not really favour Parliament because they believe that their large majority on September 4 gave them some form of divine right.

Mr. McDermid: You won't participate.

Supply

Mr. Axworthy: Time and again we have said that if Members opposite are going to use Parliament, they should use it legitimately. The Member for Brampton-Georgetown (Mr. McDermid) is cackling in his seat. I said earlier that we are not dealing with agriculture, so I do not know why he is cackling so loud.

Of course, we want a foreign policy review but it should be legitimate. The Government should ensure that the document does not consider decisions that the Government is going to take without reference to Parliament. It should not be turned into a charade.

Similarly with respect to the Investment Canada Bill, the Government should ensure that the report stage of the Bill provides an opportunity to carefully consider every amendment. However, that is not the intention of the Government. We are prepared to spend as many hours, days or weeks in the House debating these matters as is required. That is why, in one sense, the opportunity to have an Opposition day is a form of blessing in disguise, because at least it gives us an opportunity that is denied us through the normal process of Parliament to bring these matters to the attention of the public.

Mr. McDermid: You have never been denied anything.

Mr. Stevens: When are you going to say something?

Mr. Axworthy: We are quite prepared as an Opposition to sit down with the Government and discuss the Investment Canada Bill. We are prepared to work out timetables for debate and find a reasonable and rational way to present amendments. If the Minister offered to sit down with us, we would be prepared to discuss what might be useful and constructive amendments.

We recognize the Minister's right and responsibility to present legislation and maintain the principle of the Bill. However, I remind him that when we brought in the Western Grain Transportation Act over a year ago, which was equally controversial legislation, we accepted 15 to 20 amendments from the Opposition because they were legitimate, sensible and constructive amendments. We have tried to conduct ourselves in the same manner, but the Minister and the Government do not believe in that process. The Government does not want to get into such an exchange.

Mr. Stevens: You better start talking to Herb.

Mr. Axworthy: The Government should recognize the threat posed by the Mitel takeover this week. It represents the danger of an incredible loss of ability in this country to provide for growth and development in the critical area of high technology and the ability to maintain our international competitiveness. The Investment Canada Bill is severely flawed in that respect. It contains serious errors. The responsibility of this Parliament should be to correct those errors to provide for improvements and constructive amendments.