

Private Bills

Mr. Howard: The hon. gentleman has now interjected a remark while sitting. He would have ridden people out of the house on a rail if anybody while seated had interrupted when he was presiding. He has just interjected that he did not take a holier-than-thou attitude. That is just what he did when he was in the chair. He was above the call—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member has the floor for one purpose which I understand is to discuss Bill C-114.

Mr. Howard: That is my sole purpose, Mr. Speaker, but I was enticed by the hon. member for Edmonton West to depart from the rules again and I could not resist it. If he will be silent I will proceed.

Mr. Speaker: May I entice the hon. member back to Bill No. C-114.

Mr. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid my speech will be almost identical to that given by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman) because I am sure we have both been supplied with the same notes from the same source.

With respect to the bill before us one of the aspects we must consider is the question of Canadian ownership versus foreign ownership. This is something which has been considered in general terms on many other occasions, but we must examine it again in relation to this particular company, United Investment Life Assurance Company.

Some months ago on national television the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) made a firm statement to the effect that government policy was designed to move toward the repatriation—I think that is as good as a word as any other—of ownership of the Canadian economy. He said this was the philosophy of the Liberal party and of the government. Many who saw that television broadcast applauded the right hon. gentleman for taking this course. Many people were pleased to see that publicly he fully endorsed the position taken by the former minister of finance, whose present position in the cabinet escapes my memory for the moment. I think he is now President of the Privy Council. In any event I am talking about Mr. Gordon, if I may transgress the rules somewhat to indicate the gentleman.

There is a provision in the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act which says that life insurance companies must come under Canadian ownership except those that were in existence prior to the coming into

force of that provision. The Prime Minister's broadcast and that provision in the act demand of us in parliament that we inquire into the degree of Canadian or foreign ownership that exists with respect to this company.

Quite frankly, I do not see how the United Investment Life Assurance Company can get around the provision in the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act which requires life insurance companies to be Canadian owned, unless there is some loophole in the act which permits this. That may well be the case, because the insurance companies act which will apply to this company when it is incorporated is a very intricate and involved document, not easily understood except by those who have spent a lifetime dealing with insurance companies and their corporate structure.

While, as I say, I do not fully understand whether the provisions of the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act require this company to be Canadian owned, nevertheless it appears that such is the case. The statement made by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra contained a couple of references to the effect that the holding company, which owns 81 per cent of another company, that owns in turn 100 per cent of the company seeking to be incorporated, will dispose of some of its holdings to Canadians. This would not be done unless the provisions of the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act apply to the company seeking incorporation. In fact, checking earlier in the year with the superintendent of insurance we were told over the telephone that the company was indirectly American owned.

Some emphasis was placed on the proposals about Canadian participation and ownership. This is a good feature in the attitude of this company, one which other companies would be well advised to follow because, as I said, parliament is duty bound to try to put into effect the policy contained in the Canadian and British Insurance Companies Act and in the Prime Minister's television broadcast. That policy was also enunciated by the former minister of finance and was supported by some members of the cabinet just as fervently as other members of the cabinet opposed the idea of Canadian ownership. However, as I say, I think parliament is duty bound to follow the lead which the Prime Minister gave in his television broadcast and to make sure that companies seeking incorporation become Canadian owned. There is an element of Canadian ownership in the present case which reflects public policy on these matters.