

Investment Canada Act

be an incentive, target or carrot in the Bill to lure investment into the areas of Canada which need investment the most. There is nothing in this Bill that does that. There is nothing in the Bill that indicates that investment should be made, for example, in Atlantic Canada or Labrador. I would like to see that provision in the Bill.

Returning to the point which I made earlier, apart from not having a carrot, incentive or provision to target the investment, there is no provision for consultation with existing businesses and the people who work in those businesses. There should be consultation with existing business groups, chambers of commerce, unions or other groups which will be directly affected. There should be consultation with local communities. As well, there should be a provision for existing Canadian firms, if they so desire, to take advantage of the opportunity which a foreign firm identifies. Of course, that would be done without any prejudice to the foreign firm.

The situation in Newfoundland is quite critical. Newfoundland has the highest rate of unemployment and the highest cost of living in Canada. Government cut-backs are having a disastrous effect on many people in Newfoundland, both the workers and the consumers. For example, the increase in ferry rates is having a detrimental effect. The trade which existed between Nova Scotia and Newfoundland will be affected by that increase. Those cut-backs are having a disastrous effect on the economy of that area.

First, I believe that there should be safeguards to protect existing Canadian business and workers. There should be a provision for consultation with Canadians before a decision is made by the Minister to allow a foreign company to invest in Canada. Second, there should be a provision for targeting. Previously, there were provisions for targeting. As a matter of fact, part of the mandate of the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion was to do that. The mandate of that Minister was to enhance, develop and promote regional development in Canada. That was the original principle behind DREE. However, DREE has been replaced by DRIE. Some people refer to it as "Canada DRIE". Some people say that DREE has dried up. It has dried up in Newfoundland, because DRIE was primarily for manufacturing, and Newfoundland, like many western provinces, has a resource-based economy.

Part of the mandate of the Minister is to target investment and to give incentives to companies, whether they be Canadian or foreign, to set up their businesses in underdeveloped areas. This Government has already implemented certain measures which have militated against that kind of development. For example, the cut-backs in government programs and the changes in unemployment insurance regulations will have that kind of effect.

I would like to mention PIP grants. When the Liberal Government was in power it told the oil companies, whether they were foreign or Canadian, that if they drilled and explored in a certain area they would be given a certain amount of money, provided that jobs were created for Canadians, that Canadian goods and materials were used and that Canadian companies had a chance to bid. There had to be

some benefit to Canada. That was the principle behind PIP grants. However, PIP grants have been done away with. So far, nothing has been established to replace those grants. There may something in the Budget. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) may tell us that he will give tax breaks to companies which explore in the offshore. However, the policy which gave investors assistance, if there was Canadian content and a benefit to Canadian companies and workers, has been abolished.

I am seeing evidence of the removal of the existing incentives to Canadian companies, of benefits for Canadian workers and of the existing provisions for Canadian content. I think they must be highlighted in this Bill. We are telling the Minister that amendments are required to improve the Bill on behalf of Canadians, and in particular on behalf of the Canadians who live in underdeveloped parts of the country.

● (1640)

In conclusion I do want to emphasize again that I think the Government and the Minister should take the points I have made into account. I think the appropriate amendments should be made to this Bill before it comes to us for final approval.

Mr. John Gormley (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address my comments this afternoon to the proposed seven amendments with respect to Bill C-15, an Act respecting investment in Canada, and in particular to the amendments which reflect the desire of the Opposition to have divulgence of information or, as the Opposition likes to say, to make it a more open Bill. I would like to address my comments to the intent of the Opposition in asking for the kind of information contained in the seven amendments.

Essentially, the amendments seek, through various ways, to open up Investment Canada so that the Minister will be forced or empowered to release a great deal of information which, I think, on the face of it, is highly unfair to business in Canada and to those non-Canadians who come to our country to invest. It all sounds very good. The Opposition talks about open Government and about giving the ordinary Canadian the ability to look into those companies. But it is highly irregular for a Government to do what the Opposition would like our Government to undertake. On the one hand, it is suggested that Government demand information, some rather commercially sensitive information. As Hon. Members who are in business would know, that kind of information would affect a company's competitive position and investment capability. The Opposition would like the Government, through this Bill, to divulge that information openly to the public. What is so unfair is the burden which this places on the Government, which would first have to ask for it and then turn around and open it up to anyone in Canada who would like to see the information, even information which would be commercially sensitive.

I will isolate three motions as examples: Motions Nos. 8, 12 and 63, which were proposed by the New Democratic Party. Motion No. 8 asks to make public the results of agency research. It sounds noble on the face of it, but if one looks a