

the information, then bad decisions can be made and not found out about or objected to.

The third motion before us is Motion No. 32 and it deals with Clause 13. The intent of this motion is that the agency will make public within a reasonable time period all new businesses and acquisitions dealt with in this part of the legislation, and make public within a period not exceeding 14 days after notification is given all proposed investments subject to review. This is an obvious and constructive resolution to a long-standing problem.

The fourth motion we have before us is Motion No. 63 in amendment to Clause 21. It deals with net benefits, an absolutely crucial question as well. The Minister shall, within 45 days after the certified date, et cetera, send a notice having taken into account any information, undertakings and representations referred to the Minister by the agency pursuant to the section and be satisfied that the investment is likely to be of net benefit to Canada. This is absolutely the key question in the decision about whether the investment should be allowed at all; is there going to be a net benefit to Canadians? Our proposal here is to add the words:

—and shall make public his ruling including all undertakings made in connection with the investment.

A most reasonable expectation.

The fifth motion is Motion No. 69 in amendment to Clause 22. It says:

"notice to that effect to the applicant and shall make public its decision including all undertakings made by the applicant."

Again, that is absolutely essential. It is obviously beyond dispute that any undertaking should be made public and the public, who are the people most concerned because they are going to lose jobs when unwise decisions are made, should have this pertinent information.

Well, why is this not happening? The Conservative Party certainly had people who have spoken in the past in favour of openness in government. We have had references made to the late Walter Baker and he certainly was a leader in this respect. He made very strong speeches in this House in his last years of service about the requirements for full disclosure, requirements for a working democratic system, requirements that there not be cover-ups, that the public get the information it needs. These were all very sensible recommendations and we wonder why the Government is not listening to its leaders and respecting those kinds of proposals which have been made in the past.

At the time this Bill was in committee there was testimony from a number of people pleading the cause of openness in deliberations. I would like to quote in particular Gorse Howarth, a former FIRA commissioner who appeared before the committee. He said:

The most telling criticism, certainly the most telling criticism as far as I was concerned, was that the whole process was conducted in secrecy. People used words like "Star Chamber" and this, that, and the other.

Why did they use these words? Because in the consideration of this commissioner, the agency, FIRA, had to operate secret-

Investment Canada Act

ly. It was not that it is necessarily covering up any particular point, but to quote him again, he said:

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.

What he was concerned about was the current wording of the legislation. He said:

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.

Here is someone who listens to election talk and listens to Conservatives in opposition. Indeed, we were treated to many a lecture about openness and civility and other high-minded principles while these people were in opposition, and one wishes they would read their own speeches and put them in action when they are drawing up their legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) should know better than to walk between the speaker and the Chair. He has done that twice and I would just like to bring it to his attention.

Mr. Axworthy: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, previous speakers for the Conservatives, one just a very short time ago, opened up the debate on some of the wider issues, and I feel compelled to make a few closing remarks at least about some of these issues. We heard a spirited Conservative plea for more foreign investment. We heard statements that foreign investment and Canadian investment were equal. Certainly as a New Democrat how can I be against equality? Well, I would like to remind the House that there is no such equality. Foreign investment and Canadian investment have played very different roles in Canada. It would be very nice if foreign investment had the same effect that Canadian investment had. If foreign investment really had the job potential being claimed for it by the Conservatives right now, we would probably have the lowest unemployment rate in the world. We have had growing foreign investment over the past few decades in Canada and we have had extremely high unemployment. We have more unemployment than many, many other countries which are much more careful about permitting foreign investment. If job creation were the rich reward of foreign investment, we would have more job creation than we can stand.

I do want to point to the great sense of frustration that people across Canada have experienced. The jobs action group which the NDP caucus consulted recently was very worried about foreign investment. They felt decisions were being made behind closed doors, that companies would come into their communities, make their profits and leave, that they would