

Investment Canada Act

century. This shows that Canadian ownership is not adverse either in the petroleum industry or in other industries of this country. I hope that these amendments by our Party will be accepted by the House.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased once again to rise to take part in this debate which is about the fundamental direction that this country will be taking with respect to basic decisions on our economic future. This is an historic debate, a debate which profoundly affects the lives of not just our own constituents, particularly in areas in which there is a significant amount of foreign-owned industry, but the lives of all Canadians, their children and their children's children. Ultimately we are talking about the future direction of this country and whether that direction and our objective as a nation is going to be shaped here in Canada by Canadians, subject to the priority of Canadians, or whether instead, as has been advocated in this Bill by the Government, those fundamental priorities will be decided outside Canada in foreign corporate boardrooms, based not on Canadian priorities but on the global international priorities of multinational corporations, whose only concern is for the global bottom line. That is the essence of what this debate is all about.

Many witnesses appeared before the committee which gave this Bill careful study until the Government cut off debate in that committee. What we deeply regret in the context of these amendments and of our proposals generally on this Bill is that it would appear that the Government has fundamentally ignored the thrust of the representations that were made by the witnesses who appeared before that committee on this important Bill.

The amendments of my colleague from Essex-Windsor (Mr. Langdon), who has been doing such an outstanding job in leading the debate on behalf of the New Democratic Party on this vital legislation, fall into several broad categories. All of them deal with the underlying thrust of the Bill and the duties and powers of the Minister who has the obligation to implement this Bill on behalf of the Government. Perhaps nowhere else than in this grouping of amendments is the distinction more clear between the approach of the Government, which effectively is to throw the door wide open to foreign capital without any restrictions whatsoever, and the approach of the New Democratic Party, which is to say that we are prepared to accept that foreign investment can be beneficial to the people of Canada, but that investment must be made on terms and conditions which are ultimately decided by the people of Canada.

Let us look at the amendment set out in Motion No. 10. The Government's recommendation with respect to the duties and powers of the Minister states that the Minister shall assist in the development of industrial and economic policies that affect investment in Canada. The amendment of my colleague from Essex-Windsor goes far beyond that in its scope. It does not just call upon the Minister to assist in the development of these policies which will ultimately result in the demise of Canadian economic sovereignty, but to, and I quote:

—develop medium term and long term public and private industrial sector investment guidelines consistent with an industrial strategy that emphasizes full employment, growth, diversification, autonomy and export competitiveness of the Canadian economy;

What a profound contrast between the Government's approach, which basically says that the Minister may assist in the development of certain policies, and that of the New Democratic Party, which states that there is an obligation on the Minister to develop policies, not just short-term, fly by the seat of your pants policies, which has been the response of this Government to date, but to look at medium and long-term policies. Those policies should involve priorities both for the public sector and the private sector. We in this Party, unlike those on the government benches and in many ways unlike those in the Official Opposition, believe that there is an important role to be played by the public sector in this country.

The jobs task force, which was chaired so ably by my colleagues from Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) and Essex-Windsor, held hearings across this country. That task force was told in no uncertain terms that the people of Canada accept an important role for the public sector, not some monolithic, bureaucratic, centralized public sector, but a public sector which is responsive to local community needs, responsive to the concerns and priorities of people who live in communities across this land.

There is a role for both the public and the private sector. There is an emphasis on an industrial strategy which has as its heart the promotion of full employment. Nowhere in this Bill is there a commitment by the Government of Canada to the most fundamental and basic priority that must affect all Canadians, and that is the commitment to full employment.

Each of us has seen daily in our constituency offices the effects of the personal and economic devastation that is caused by unemployment in this country, whether it be young people finishing university or high school, out in the job market and desperately trying to find any job, short term, long term, part-time, full-time, or whether it be the insecurity, even of those people who have jobs now, afraid that they may lose their employment. This Bill turns over those basic decisions about the direction of the Canadian economy to faceless men in foreign boardrooms. It is that which we are fundamentally opposed to and that which we will fight right down the line in this Bill until the Government comes to its senses and recognizes that it must change its direction. Full employment, therefore, is a fundamental priority.

Our amendment also suggests diversification in the economy. Autonomy, as I have indicated, lies at the heart of our recommendations so that it is Canadians who are making the decisions about our economy. With regard to export competitiveness, the situation is going to increasingly become the case in Canada of foreign companies deciding that because they do not want to compete with their American head offices, they are not going to be aggressive in the export market. We say that many new jobs lie in the export area. If foreign companies are not prepared aggressively to promote those opportunities,