

Canadian Business Corporations Act

The bill before us is probably the first step to restoring some confidence in business in general. We see the stock market at a very low ebb; many of our corporations are going to the wall as a result of difficulty in raising money to carry on their operations. Traditionally they operated through the stock market. Today many of them find that their bonds and debentures are not saleable. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) tells us that the major key to levelling off inflation lies in increasing supply. We may or may not agree with this theory, but that is his point. Well, we find that in trying to raise funds to continue expansion in their operations the business community have encountered severe difficulties. Some have raised prices because there is a continual cycle of price increases going on, and they are using the retained profit to finance their own expansion.

One of the best ways to overcome a good deal of the inflation in the country would probably be to bring back confidence in the stock market so that shares will be traded again. This would allow the companies to return to their usual practice of asking for a reasonable return on their investments so that they might pay shareholders in return for the risk they have taken. This bill is a first, though limited step toward clearing up the business climate.

As my hon. friend said, the government has followed Ontario's lead. I note that British Columbia has put a new corporations act on its statute books in the last few years, and I hope other provinces will follow the example of Ontario and the federal government by enacting corporations legislation which will ensure a degree of uniformity across Canada. As hon. members realize, Canada is a difficult country in which to do business because of the vast distances between major centres; there is a tendency for a great deal of the commerce to congregate in four or five areas. This results in regional disparity. If we could promote the establishment of uniform corporations legislation across the country it would go a long way toward improving business conditions in Canada generally, and thus help to restore confidence among investors.

While the bill is in committee we might consider whether or not it provides for the exercise of any effective control over branch plant operations. From my own study of the measure so far, I cannot see that it does. However, we may find that some guidelines are set out on the basis of which branch plants can operate. This would not only encourage such firms to stay here; it would be good for the people of Canada as well as for the plants themselves. Generally, as I have said, the businessman is a straightforward, honest guy. Most of them are not nitpicking lawyers—

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Kempling: I see there are a lot of lawyers here this afternoon. Businessmen appreciate legislation which they can understand without the help of expensive advice, and I congratulate the draftsmen for putting some clear wording in this measure, wording which the average man can understand. If the Income Tax Act and the competition legislation could be drafted in the same way, businessmen would probably be able to surge ahead with greater speed.

[Mr. Kempling.]

I shall resume my seat, now, in order that the question may be put, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Order. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE

REFERENCE OF FINKELMAN REPORT TO SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Mr. T. Lefebvre (Pontiac): Madam Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House in order to announce, on behalf of the government, the establishment of a special committee to review the Finkelman report.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Lefebvre: Then I move:

That the Members of this House to serve on the special Joint Committee on Employer-Employee Relations in the Public Service be Messrs. Alexander, Baker (Grenville-Carleton), Blais, Clermont, Daudlin, Dinsdale, Dionne (Kamouraska), Fairweather, Forrester, Francis, Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier), Herbert, Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre) and O'Connell; and that a message be sent to the Senate to acquaint Their Honours thereof.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): It being four o'clock, the House will now proceed to private members' business as listed, on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions, public bills, private bills.

Mr. Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I think there would be general agreement to call private member's Notice of Motion No. 4 standing in the name of the hon. member for St. John's West.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): There is certainly no objection to calling item No. 4, but I notice that according to the order paper items Nos. 2 and 3 were allowed to stand and retain their position by unanimous consent. I presume this arrangement will continue and that they will not lose their places on the order paper.

Mr. Lefebvre: That is agreed.