

● (1730)

In a previous set of amendments, which unfortunately were ruled out of order, we provided eight or nine specific enumerations of what the ministerial powers and duties should be. However, in its wisdom the Chair felt that that was going beyond the scope of the Bill. These are accepted as being in order by the Chair. Therefore, I make the case that they do not interfere with the objectives of the Bill, but do in fact establish that this is still a Bill to review and notify on foreign investment.

I know that some Members opposite may want it otherwise, but you cannot camouflage the fact that there is still to be a review of foreign investment. It will be a weak review, it may be a non-influential review, but it is a review nonetheless. As a result, it is important once again that this be clearly established in the Bill. Perhaps more important, we say that part of the powers and duties of the Minister should be to share information, if not with Parliament, at least with other Departments and agencies so that they can complement decisions taken under Investment Canada with their own investment decisions.

One of the most important responsibilities of any Government is to get its act together to co-ordinate the various actions of different Departments and agencies. That is not an easy thing to do, especially when you have 40 Ministers, almost one-third the Ministers in history. There is a requirement to bring those different Departments and agencies together in order to co-ordinate the various forms of investment that might be made by the Department of Transport, the Department of Supply and Services or the Department of Communications. We say in this Bill in particular that the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion should be required to try to co-ordinate those investment plans that come about as a result of a decision he is taking under this Bill, to co-ordinate that with other Departments.

I make that case because of its importance for regional development. If, for example, a foreign investor is establishing here, because of the review provisions in this Act the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion should know that there may be some impact upon resource development in the Atlantic provinces. That would immediately affect the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Minister of Transport and the Minister of State for Forestry. Surely we should try to bring those various Ministers together to get a total impact of that investment as opposed to having it happen separately in a discordant fashion.

I ask Members opposite what is wrong with that. Surely they are not going to argue that that kind of co-ordination, that sharing of information is somehow inimical to the interests of Canada and inimical to the interests of this Government. Equally, it may be that the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion receives notification about a proposed take-over and that some other Minister is working on a proposal for a Canadian investor in the same region, in the same area. That Minister should also be informed of the intentions. It should redound upon the ultimate decision taken

Investment Canada Act

by the Minister responsible under this Act to refuse that application for a takeover or for some pre-acquisition.

I hope that the Conservative Members of this Parliament will understand that the amendment we are bringing forward in this case, Motion No. 19, is designed to ensure that any decision taken by the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion will be compatible with Canadian investment opportunities and that we will not by his decision forgo or cancel out some activity by a Canadian investor or enterprise that would be put out of action by a foreign investor. Certainly that fits the objective of the Bill which, we say, is to encourage Canadian investment. I would assume that if there is to be an advantage or a priority, this Government will have to accept that the priority should be given to Canadian investment.

In the remarks I made a few minutes earlier, I pointed out that the evidence is conclusive that Canadian investment carries with it substantially higher economic benefits than does foreign investment in terms of research and development, export potential and less reliance upon imports from other countries. Therefore, we have a clear case. In weighing the balance, if there is some kind of judgment between the advantage of a Canadian investor and a foreign investor, the Canadian investor should have the priority. That will only happen if there is some sharing of information, which is what our amendment proposes.

If Hon. Members accept that basic proposition, they should support this amendment. We will give them enough time, certainly during the debate on this motion, to take it up in caucus, to consult with their Minister and perhaps come in with a willingness to show that they as a Government are prepared to say in a clear way that when it comes down to a choice, they are going to choose Canadians over foreigners, that they will clearly enunciate their belief that when it comes down to weighing the balance, it is Canadian investment that should have the priority. That is not to say that foreign investment will not be considered, but under this amendment we require the Minister under this Act to make sure that in the weighing of the balance the preference will clearly be on the side of Canadian investment and Canadian enterprise. With that, I recommend this amendment to the House. I look forward to its constructive response.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on both amendments. I think the grouping is reasonable. Together they make one very important point, that is, that the base of responsibility for the operation of the agency and the work of the Minister under this Act must be as wide as possible. Both these amendments have the effect of asking for that widening beyond what is provided by the Bill at present. That widening is needed not only so that the operation will be seen to be fair in a situation where there are competing interests and a possibility of the appearance of unfairness of any decision by any person or body, not only for the best chance of fairness and appearance of fairness, but also for effectiveness. I will come back to that with regard to the garment industry as I have become acquainted with it in Spadina.