

Private Bills

example, it serves its purpose very well. I am sure the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) welcomes the opportunity to discuss pipe lines on the floor of the house.

On balance I believe it is best we should discuss these applications or have them available for discussion. I do not think we can abdicate our responsibility when it comes to the principle of the incorporation of insurance companies or banks. This house does not exist merely to say "Amen" to government legislation. It has wider responsibilities. I know there are certain members opposite who feel that its only duty is to praise with high hosannas the wisdom of government legislation. That is not the purpose of parliament.

Bills of the type now before us are, of course, sponsored privately since the government itself cannot accept responsibility for promoting the incorporation of private companies. There are no doubt some imperfections attached to the present way of doing things but I cannot agree with the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra that we should farm out this responsibility to yet another board, yet another group of officials. The tendency within the Liberal party has been to farm these things out to a bureaucracy outside parliament, and I cannot agree with it.

To return to the bill itself, we know it will go before the committee on finance, trade and economic affairs where the sponsors and their counsel, as well as the superintendent of insurance, will be available for examination in detail by members of that committee before the adoption or otherwise of this bill is recommended.

I appreciate what the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra has done in placing on record a detailed memorandum as to the purposes of this company and the identity of its owners. I shall have some serious questions to ask in this regard when the bill goes before the committee. This is a bill for the incorporation of a Canadian insurance company to be owned and controlled by outside interests. I have some reservations about that.

I have reservations about insurance companies being closely tied to investment companies or investment fund interests. Unfortunately, during the past few years there has been a proliferation of these related interests incorporated under provincial jurisdiction. Some of these operations could bear much closer scrutiny, particularly when portfolios are dangerously exposed to the influence of sudden deflation or perhaps unwise investment. I raise these points as an indication of

[Mr. Lambert.]

the type of questions I shall wish to ask in the committee.

● (6:20 p.m.)

So far as the principle of the incorporation of such companies is concerned I would say that provided the applications meet the legal requirements, provided the policyholders are protected, and provided the proposed operation meets the strict requirements of the superintendent of insurance, I do not think anyone should adopt a paternalistic attitude toward the sponsors or investors or try to hold their hands. It should be borne in mind that those who seek the right to incorporate companies and invest their own money are men of business judgment. They make their investment on their own responsibility. If they wish to risk their own money, and so long as no one else gets hurt, that is fine. I am quite prepared to see they get the right to incorporate and to try to make a success of their company. If they do not make a success of it, it is their own money that they lose. All I am concerned about in a matter of this kind is that the policy holders do not get hurt. So far as the shareholders are concerned, as the saying goes they are big boys; they are over 21 and should be able to take care of themselves. I do not think we have to be paternalistic to the point where we guarantee that they will not suffer a loss. With these remarks, Mr. Speaker, I am quite prepared to recommend to the house that the bill be accepted on second reading but that in committee we look into the questions I have raised.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, a few moments ago we had an interesting byplay about attendance in the house and I would like to welcome to the chamber those Liberal members who are more in number than the four who were here a little while ago. At least the interruption I made has prompted a greater attendance than was the case previously.

One of the most interesting aspects of that byplay was the proposition made by the hon. gentleman who a few years ago held the most honoured position in this house and who perhaps was as heavy-handed and hard-headed a self-appointed lecturer on the rules as this parliament has ever seen. To listen to that hon. gentleman say in effect, "To heck with the rules, they don't mean anything any longer," is a preposterous proposition, and indicates how shallow an approach is taken to the rules depending on what point one wants to—

Mr. Lambert: I certainly did not take a sanctimonious, holier-than-thou attitude.