

Teleglobe Canada

private sector corporations that are owned by Canadians through the state, so in its third year in office it would not be unreasonable or outlandish to expect it to establish ground rules when it comes to privatization. In this way those who are affected would know from the beginning that the Government is protecting some basic rights, including pension rights.

It is in that sense that I join the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe, the Hon. Member for Montréal—Sainte-Marie and the Hon. Member for Ottawa—Vanier in putting forward this amendment which, as I mentioned earlier, is a very sensible one. It is intended to provide protection to the employees in relation to their pensions. It is an amendment which we hope the Government with its majority and overwhelming power in the House will have enough sense to listen to and actually support when it comes to a vote in a few moments' time.

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I took my time getting to my feet in the hope that one of my colleagues from the Conservative Party might enter the debate.

Mr. Lewis: We do that in caucus.

Mr. Keeper: My hon. friend says that they do it in caucus. We know that they discuss these types of questions behind closed doors. What we want to know is whether they are prepared to discuss the question in public. Is the Government prepared to answer questions that have been put to it by members of the Opposition in broad daylight so that everyone can know where it stands?

The Government has decided, and I think foolishly, without due regard for the interests of Canadians, to privatize Teleglobe. Such a move will take our telecommunications industry from the public sector and place it in private hands. This move will make us the only country in the world that will rely upon a private profit-making company to handle its international communications.

There are serious questions of public policy involved here, including questions with respect to national security. There are also questions concerning economic development, as well as the national economic interests of Canada. It is important for us to deal with the amendment which is before the House in the context of our serious questions concerning the direction in which the Government is going.

Since it has decided to turn over Teleglobe to the private sector, what implications are there in this legislation for the people who work for Teleglobe Canada, in addition to the interests which I have already mentioned in terms of the public? What we are being told is that the people who work for Teleglobe Canada are very worried and concerned. What they are concerned about is their pensions. Over the years that they have worked for Teleglobe they have negotiated pension arrangements. After working a lifetime they should be able to enjoy a secure retirement. This is an ideal, a goal, and a dream of all Canadians. Of course it is the reason that my Party has

fought over the years for pensions for average Canadians, so that they can be secure in their old age.

• (1210)

The pension before us is not a public one. It is a private pension which has been negotiated between the parties—the employees and the employer. It is important that the security of the employees be protected. They have earned their pensions. Year after year they sat down at the bargaining table to negotiate. The pensions have been costed out, and they have been a part of the deal between the employees and the employer. These people are not asking for something for nothing; they are asking for that which they have already earned. They are also asking that it be protected.

However, the Government plays its political games to satisfy its own ideological drives. It seeks to fly the flag of privatization and to convince Canadians that it is good for all Canadians. While it is playing these political games, the people who work for Teleglobe Canada want to be assured that they will be treated fairly. They want assurance that their pensions, for which they have worked so hard and negotiated each year, will be protected and secure so that in their old age they can enjoy the fruits of their labour.

We have been called upon by the employees of Teleglobe Canada to indicate to the Government that they are very worried about present pension arrangements. They are concerned that there is no satisfactory agreement to protect their pensions. In fact, the pension arrangements are such that if demand or the forces of the market-place change, the company has a right to change the pensions. If we know anything about markets, it is that they are shifting. They are like the sands of the Sahara; they shift with the winds. A guarantee which depends upon no change in the market-place is not a guarantee at all. In fact, it is a contradiction in terms.

These people are genuinely and legitimately concerned that their pensions are being put in jeopardy by the privatization of Teleglobe Canada and that their interests are being sacrificed on the altar of privatization, because the Government wants to pursue a policy for which it has no mandate but which simply satisfies its particular ideological inclinations.

There are some pension precedents which are worth while noting. When Canadian Arsenals was sold by the Government to a private company, or put into the private sector, pensions were provided on a generous basis for the employees. It is possible to provide adequate protection of the pensions of employees who are presently public employees and will soon be private ones. According to Treasury Board figures, the difference between what is being arranged for Teleglobe employees and what is in place for Canadian Arsenals employees amounts to \$7 million.

What does that mean? It means that each employee at Canadian Arsenals has \$10,000 more in the kitty to secure or bolster his or her pension than those at Teleglobe Canada. There is a measurable and quantitative difference between the