

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 16, 1985

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 62—FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT—TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg-Fort Garry) moved:

That this House condemns the Government not only for its failure to protect Canada from potential problems of foreign direct investment as demonstrated by the Government's failure to take effective action in dealing with foreign take-overs in the cases of Mitel and of the book publishing industry, but also for its contempt for the parliamentary process by cutting off free debate on its iniquitous investment legislation without providing adequate time for consideration of dozens of important and constructive amendments.

He said: Mr. Speaker, we are now in our sixth straight day of Opposition motions and resolutions. This has to be one of the most incredible and unorthodox situations with which Parliament has been faced in decades. What it basically adds up to is that the Government has gone on strike, or perhaps on lock-out. The Government doesn't want to govern, Mr. Speaker. I think the real reason is that the Government has realized that once all the fun and games of making appointments and having public relations meetings and television interviews, is over, it really has to get down to the hard, difficult and serious business of governing this country and it doesn't want to do it.

Conservatives have never liked to govern. Their long history has shown that. Now that that Party finally has a chance to govern, what happens? We have six straight days in Parliament with no government business on the Order Paper. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, any Government in a western democracy so totally abdicating its responsibility that it has to rely upon the Opposition to maintain the entire parliamentary business for almost a whole week?

I have to say that this really is one of the most curious commentaries on this Government. It is perhaps not only that the Government doesn't like to govern any more, but, probably more importantly, it is embarrassed by what it has on the Order Paper and doesn't want Parliament to bring it out for public examination or review. All I can conclude from this strange and unusual period we are going through is that the Government is somehow hoping that if it keeps the Opposition presenting the business of the day in Parliament it will then be able to squeeze all its Bills and estimates into the very last weeks of Parliament, and rush them through in order to make

sure Parliament does not get the opportunity to exercise its proper function, which is clearly to examine these issues and exchange different points of view. That is what we basically see in the attitude of the Government in this parliamentary procedure of having nothing but Opposition Days for a full week, and in its attempt to bring in closure on the only major piece of economic legislation that has been introduced. It is clear that they are afraid, and not prepared to defend their case in an honest, forthright, and effective way. Instead they rely upon all of the dodges; they hide behind procedure, and look for ways of avoiding and evading those responsibilities.

● (1110)

The fact is they cannot evade them. Holiday time is over. Canadians who are going to the polls are giving a very clear message.

Mr. Stevens: Fifty-four per cent in the last Gallup.

Mr. Axworthy: There is only one poll which really counts; that is when people put their ballots in the box.

Mr. Dick: You got 26 per cent.

Mr. Axworthy: They gave a mandate last September and we all admitted that. No one is shying away from that. The only people who are unprepared to live up to that mandate are the Conservatives themselves. We are prepared to admit that we were defeated and are no longer the Government. We are now acting as the Opposition. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have been unable to recognize that their role has changed. They do not want to govern.

The Canadian people are sending messages in one provincial election after another as they vote against the Conservative Party. A large part of that vote is directed toward the "Mulroney mugwumps" who do not know what they are up to. There is a very large counter-reaction taking place because the people realize that the Government is not prepared to effectively concentrate on the economic issues of the country.

In the past week we have seen clear examples of incredible confusion and contradiction. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) made one of the century's greatest jokes; he calls it a foreign policy review. However, if Canadians are to make any use of it, the Government had better send crayons out with it so it can be used as a colouring book. There is nothing in that document other than contradictions. It says they will review Canada's military strategy, but they will make decisions before making the review.

The grey or chartreuse document says that in order to stay internationally competitive we must ensure that Canadians