

Investment Canada Act

● (1240)

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to congratulate the Hon. Member who just spoke for having put to the House Motions Nos. 8, 12, 32, 63, 69, 74 and 75. We support these amendments; indeed, we agree with the common thread that can be seen in this grouping. The fact that the Bill as proposed by the Government does absolutely nothing to open up foreign investment review decision processes bothers us, and I think in the interests of greater parliamentary and, possibly more importantly, public scrutiny, that these amendments should receive some attention and support by the Government.

They should especially interest Government members because they are the ones who are going to go to the Minister when they are affected by decisions taken by that Minister and ask him what happened to the jobs, the research and development and the investment. He will say he does not have to tell them because the Act gives him total discretion. He does not have to tell them anything. That is what the back-benches of the Tories will be facing because what I just said is what is in this Bill; secrecy, power, and one person controlling what? Controlling information, which is as vital to me and this House as it is to all Canadians.

The argument that is put to us by this Government that they must remain secret holds no more water than StatsCan when it asks the people in my riding their name, address, income and their general state of affairs. We are not interested in the balance sheet of the company or in knowing from the Minister whether we have a paying proposition or not; what we are asking the Minister by these amendments is to come clean with the Canadian public and tell us if there is in the take-over some significant advantage to Canadians. If so, make it public. Tell us. Tell us openly what they see in this thing. Tell the Members, tell the back-benchers, tell the book-ends, tell all those nice seals with their flippers going yes, yes, yes. Tell them the truth once in a while what is happening in their ridings. Tell them what is going on.

Mr. Foster: He never does.

Mr. Gauthier: He never does. Why should he? The law says he does not have to. What we are trying to do is open up this legislation. As I said, the common thread is information. Information for whom? For back-benchers and the public of Canada. I hear the Hon. Member for Gatineau (Mrs. Mailly) say this is acceptable. I invite her to get up and say so.

Mrs. Mailly: Accessible.

Mr. Gauthier: If you believe that is acceptable, for God's sake get up and say it.

Mrs. Mailly: Accessible!

Mr. Gauthier: How can it be accessible to the Hon. Member for Gatineau unless she has a particular way into the Government, which I doubt very much. How can she access that information if the Minister is given the right to say no? What

is going to happen to that pulp and paper mill of hers? What is going to happen to all those industrial commitments she made in the last election? What is going to happen to those jobs she said she would create? She will never know what happened to them because the Minister will say he does not have to tell her. That is what is going to happen.

Mrs. Mailly: Nonsense and you know it.

Mr. Gauthier: It is not nonsense. I wager that within the next few years that Member will be up saying the Minister has been unfair to the riding of Gatineau because he did not tell us what he was doing regarding investment, job creation and good, sound research and development which creates jobs.

Mrs. Mailly: You do not know what goes on in my riding but I do.

Mr. Gauthier: I invite the Hon. Member to get up and make public her views on this most important subject. We want to know from the Minister how the Government performs. We do not want to know what the profits are, we do not want to know what the situation of a specific company is. We are not interested in that. We want to know about the undertakings. What undertakings did the Minister give to a foreign company wanting to come into Canada, and what significant benefits were in that deal for Canadians? The concentration of effort on much larger investments means that more attention should be devoted to each one. But information can be presented and I said before and I repeat that information can be packaged in such a way that it would be informative to us, yet still preserve and protect those interests which have nothing to do with my interests in terms of profits. I do not want to know whether the company is making profits, I want to know if it is operating as a benefit to Canadians.

Mrs. Mailly: Well then, you are interested in profits.

Mr. Gauthier: The thread through this whole series of amendments, and unfortunately I cannot speak to all of them, is that of information, openness with Members of Parliament and the public, and I commend to Government Members the motions presented and hope they support or at least speak to them today.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, just a few words on the amendments before us. I would like to appeal specifically to my new friends, all these new Conservative back-benchers from Ontario, Quebec and the rest of the country, on the issue and principle behind these amendments; that is, the question of secrecy. Some of them perhaps used to be Liberals in the olden days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Boudria: Be nice.

Mr. Nystrom: But if they followed this Parliament a number of years ago they would know that one of the things the Conservative Party crusaded on for years and years was that of openness in Government. There was too much secrecy in government. Why was the Trudeau Government so secretive?