

*Investment Canada Act*

not have to answer to the people, the Government or even the workers.

Mr. Speaker, those are the reasons why I support the amendments. Needless to say, my very first consideration is the protection of jobs in this country, particularly in the Atlantic region with which I am more directly concerned.

● (1510)

[English]

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Motions Nos. 8, 12, 32, 63, 69, 74 and 75 which have been grouped for discussion. All of the motions deal with making information available to the public and potential business investors in Canada as it applies to foreign investment.

The amendments were put forward by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Essex-Windsor (Mr. Langdon). They are designed to assure the public's right to know about the activities of foreign investors. As well, we hope to accomplish four or five very basic things which we believe are necessary for business to operate in a proper manner in Canada, in order that all Canadians can feel confident that the investment will in fact be beneficial to the country. The method by which we could determine whether the provisions are being met is through the availability of information. That is the intention of most of the amendments.

In order to ensure that foreign investment is providing a benefit to Canada, we believe it is necessary to be able to perform studies on foreign investment patterns and behaviours. We should be able to research such questions as: What is the nature of the investment? Is it coming from outside Canada, or is the investor using Canadian funds to take over a Canadian company? Is the benefit to the country one of combining existing technology or marketing expertise with an outsider? There are many instances in which combinations could be beneficial both to workers and investors in Canada by establishing a joint venture in new technology or marketing expertise with a company from outside Canada. All Members of the House are aware of instances in which the combining of forces has been beneficial to Canadians.

However, the point which is at issue in these amendments is the question of how to monitor the decisions. How do Canadians or potential investors get information to determine whether the benefits which were espoused in fact accrue to Canadians. We believe that more information should be made available which relates to the performance of foreign business in Canada. That is not something which is beyond dispute. It is a question which many people in business and in Government have wrestled within their own minds.

We all know that Americans have far more access to information concerning investors and business than we do in Canada. Some of the amendments attempt to give Canadians, who are interested in what is happening in Canadian business, a similar kind of access to basic information about the companies. That information is available to interested persons if they

go to the United States and research the companies which have branches in Canada. If a Canadian wants to find out what a particular chief executive officer of a company in Canada is paid, he is more likely to find that information by going to sources in the United States than to sources in Canada. The information is simply not available in Canada. It is basic information and should be made more available to the public.

During the course of this debate we will also be proposing amendments which set out the types of reviewable investment, that is, investments which have resulted in take-overs of Canadian companies. We believe that the rules and the requirements for the company which is taking over should be made more explicit and that the requirements for the provision of information should be made stronger.

In addition, one of the amendments attempts to have undertakings made by the foreign investor to the Agency in exchange for approval. The Agency would then have some bargaining power to extract basic information from the investing company in exchange for permission to invest in Canada. Along with that permission would come certain requirements and undertakings with which the investing company would have to live.

The last set of amendments which are proposed would have the effect of providing a more systematic and public monitoring of approved take-overs to ensure compliance with the undertakings which the investor had given.

The question of secrecy in business is one which is much discussed in Canada. The question of public disclosure and freedom of information has been a very favourable topic in this Chamber. Over the past number of years I have listened with interest to members of the Conservative Party, when they were the Official Opposition, spell out in very clear and concise terms why it is that Canadians should be entitled to more information on government activities, cabinet decisions and decisions which are made by Crown corporations. We submit that decisions which are made by private corporations should also be made available.

That question was put to witnesses who appeared before the standing committee. One witness, Mr. Gorse Howarth, a former Commissioner of FIRA, gave some interesting testimony on the issue. He said:

● (1520)

I recognize as well as anybody does that every business has its secrets and that it would be exceedingly bad for some of those secrets to become known to its competitors, perhaps even to its workers; and, I have even heard it suggested, to its shareholders. But not everything should be secret. Not everything should be placed under this cloak of secrecy. Or, if you do, then there will be the same criticism and there will be the same sense of unfairness.

So it is to correct this potential for unfairness, or sense of unfairness that we are supporting the amendments to the Bill before the House at this time. Former Commissioner Gorse Howarth went on when questioned to say:

—we should encourage, for instance, workers and their unions to come forward and say what they thought about this and how they saw it developing. I do not know whether we were right to do that or not, but we did. I suppose you could