

Government Orders

convention between Canada and the republic of Estonia, a convention between Canada and the republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and a protocol between Canada and the republic of Hungary, for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

As the bill states, the purpose of this enactment is to implement income tax conventions that have been signed with Latvia, Estonia, Trinidad and Tobago, and a protocol to the income tax convention with Hungary. As the bill says, these treaties have been signed. The treaty with Latvia was signed in Ottawa on April 26, 1995. The agreement with Estonia was signed in Tallinn on June 2, 1995. The agreement with Trinidad and Tobago was signed in Toronto on September 11 of this year. The protocol with Hungary was signed back on May 3, 1994 in Budapest.

Tax treaties are designed to alleviate double taxation of income earned in one country by a person resident in another country. While the present position of Latvia, Estonia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Hungary limits the potential for additional investment by residents of these countries in Canada, the tax treaties in question will certainly be helpful to Canadian corporations and individuals with operations and investments in those countries.

As the parliamentary secretary has already alerted the House, these agreements contain provisions on withholding tax, on capital gains, on non-discrimination—discrimination is prohibited but only on the basis of the nationality of the taxpayers—pensions and annuities, and double taxation relief.

These are important agreements. They now must be approved by Parliament to make them official.

I have been in these countries, except for Trinidad and Tobago. I have visited Latvia, Estonia and Hungary. I was in these countries before they were sovereign countries, when they were forced to be under the Soviet Union. I have visited them after they obtained their independence. Canada was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the three Baltic states and Hungary, et cetera.

I would like to differ with my colleague from Jonquière very strongly. He tries to compare Quebec to these countries. I hope he will read his history. Latvia and Estonia, which are mentioned in this bill, were sovereign countries at one time but they had their sovereignty taken away from them by the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement. That was not the people's choice; it was forced on them. Now through democratic elections they are choosing their own governments. That is why these countries are now ready to do business with the western world and the entire globe.

I was in those two countries just last summer and in Hungary two years ago. All of those countries are open for business. So is Trinidad and Tobago, but I have never been there so I cannot speak for it, but the other three countries are open for business. They do not want handouts, although we have helped them a lot with our technical assistance program.

• (1355)

The technical co-operation program has been placed under CIDA. We have helped those countries in language training for example. Many people living in Estonia speak nothing but Russian. In order to obtain their citizenship they must learn Estonian. There is a big demand for learning Estonian very quickly. We are helping Estonians with the technology for teaching languages.

I wish the hon. member would read his history and not compare la belle province with sovereign countries like the three Baltic states, Hungary, et cetera.

I was very shocked to hear the hon. member say that Canadians want to see French disappear. Where has the hon. member been for the last 10 years? I was in education for 27 years. The big trend was to have children attend total immersion French programs. Children from British Columbia to Newfoundland are graduating having spoken the two official languages from as early as grade 3.

The hon. member was concerned that there is no preservation of the French language. The Constitution of Canada preserves the French language. If Quebec separates, that guarantee is gone. That is why Quebecers have to be shown very clearly what they are going to vote for on October 30. Do you want to separate from Canada, period? If you do, along with everything else Quebec may lose is the protection of the French language and French culture.

I am very emotional about that because my wife happens to come from Quebec. Most of her family lives in la belle province. I am so pleased when my nieces and nephews write to me. I have a card in my office which I invite the hon. member to come and see. It reads: "Mon oncle, je t'aime. My uncle, I love you". When my niece sees me she tells me the same thing: "Wujek, ja Cie Kocham". She will also tell me: "Uncle, I love you". It is great that in a province, le beau Québec, Canadians can grow up with three languages. What more can we ask for? Not only protecting the French language, but also allow young Canadians to grow up in these other—

The Speaker: I hate to interrupt any member, but you will have the floor after question period. It being 2 p.m. we will now proceed to statements by members.