

CORPORATE SHAREHOLDING LIMITATION ACT

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister could explain this bill introduced yesterday in the Senate, which would prohibit provincial governments from acquiring more than a 10 per cent ownership in any company engaged in interprovincial and international transportation by energy pipelines, railways, airlines, shipping, trucking, bus lines and commodity pipelines. Would the Prime Minister tell us why the Government has taken this sudden action?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I think it is quite clear the government's intention was to introduce draft legislation in order to reaffirm its authority and jurisdiction in areas that are absolutely vital to the economy and unity of this country.

[English]

REASONS FOR INTRODUCTION IN SENATE

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, may I ask the Prime Minister, first, was this legislation discussed in the spirit of co-operation and of trusting a Canadian? Was this legislation discussed with provincial governments before it was introduced in the Senate? Second, why was it snuck into the Senate instead of being introduced in the House of Commons?

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, there are two very good reasons why the bill was introduced. First of all, in doing so the government will avoid many problems in its dealings with the provinces—an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. In this case, Madam Speaker, the provinces can hardly blame the Canadian government for wanting to safeguard its jurisdiction. This measure is not aimed against the provinces. It is a Canadian measure for the benefit of the government of Canada. However, I am hardly surprised to see the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party take this stand, since he is rather fond of dismantling federal responsibility for the sake of the provinces.

REASONS FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have another question for the minister—

[English]

—but, I should prefer to get an answer from the Prime Minister—if the Prime Minister knows anything about this.

Will the Prime Minister tell us why this measure was introduced in the Senate—was snuck in rather than brought in here publicly, to the House of Commons?

Oral Questions

Why is the Government of Canada, just weeks after it has spoken about the need to establish a climate of confidence and trust, sneaking around in this way, trying to limit the capacity of provincial governments to act? Why is it doing that without any kind of consultation? Why do its actions always put the lie to its language?

• (1500)

[Translation]

Hon. André Ouellet (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I felt it was important to introduce this bill after the closing of the market. And besides, our Parliament has two Houses, and I am therefore surprised at the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and his lack of appreciation of the Senate. In any event, once the draft legislation tabled in the Senate has been considered there, it will be considered later on in the House of Commons. Furthermore, the opposition knows perfectly well that seventeen bills are being considered in Parliament at the present time, and that we shall have to proceed with these before considering any new legislation. I may add that there was no attempt to do this in a surreptitious or sneaky manner. Tabled draft legislation in the Senate, which is after all a public place, is part of the business of Parliament, and I find the attitude of the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party very strange.

[English]

Madam Speaker: The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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SOCIAL SECURITY

LACK OF PENSIONS FOR SINGLE WOMEN AGED SIXTY TO SIXTY-FIVE YEARS

Hon. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Madam Speaker, I should like to address one of my questions to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. As a matter of fact, some of us feel very strongly about the way the Minister over the years has endorsed legislation for social development. However, there is one fact of law that is wrong and must be corrected, and I call on the Minister to do it. I refer to the fact that women between the ages of 60 and 65 who have no marital connection, and no income, are denied any pension at all. I ask the Minister to get the law corrected so that provision can be made for these women.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Monique Bégin (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Madam Speaker, even if it is not in the tradition of Question Period, I do not think Hon. Members would mind if I recall to all of us that it was about 13 months ago, today or tomorrow, that the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre