

Improvement Loans

the Small Businesses Loans Act and the Fisheries Improvement Loans Act, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): By leave now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Len Marchand (for the Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for High Park-Humber Valley (Mr. Jelinek).

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that finally even the government members are giving me recognition and applause. I will be very brief. I do not want to rehash what was said on second reading as well as the committee stage.

Bill C-48, as hon. members know, is before us only for the purpose of extending the act which would have expired at the end of this month. As the hon. member for Parry Sound-Muskoka (Mr. Darling) stated, the eligibility level is being raised as well as the amount at which loans will be guaranteed which, by the way, merely keeps up with inflation. Therefore, there is no further assistance to the small community.

I have touched on the subject of definition which is a matter of great importance for the future. This was covered previously in my amendment. Interest rates is another matter which concerns me greatly. This was discussed at second reading and in the committee stage.

What concerns me most is that not only the minister responsible for small business but his officials and those involved in small business matters are not with it, if I can use that term. For example, they were asked in committee about the breakdown of the number of businesses between small business, farming and fishing as dealt with by this bill. They did not have the answer. They did not know who applied for the loans and was turned down. They did not know what the criteria was based on for raising the eligibility level to \$1.5 million. They did not have reasons for the criteria raising the loans from \$50,000 to \$75,000. They did not have answers to anything pertinent to the small business community.

Not one of these officials dealing with this bill or other matters relating to small business was ever a small businessman himself. They had no knowledge of the small business community in their provinces or the potential solutions emanating from these debates or from interested groups in past months.

[Mr. Marchand.]

I said I would be brief and I will be. I only have one other matter that I ask for on behalf of the small businessman. It has been said in the past, I say it again and will continue to say it in the future. The government cannot deal with the problems of small business until it has an overall policy that deals with all problems relating to small business.

We know some of the problems, such as the excessive amount of paperwork, government intervention, regulation and control as well as restrictions placed on small businessmen. We know the small problems. We even have some potential solutions to those problems. What we do not have in this country and what other countries do have is a general overall policy, as we suggested in an opposition day debate a week or two ago, under a small business act. That is the only way we will catch up to other industrialized nations in dealing with the problems of small business.

The minister has been in this portfolio for nine months. A woman can have a child in that amount of time, but the government cannot have a policy. We have heard no suggestion of a policy. Bill C-48 is simply an extension of the act. Nothing has been done for the small business community of this country. That is one of the underlying reasons for the continuing problems in our economy, both in the case of secondary manufacturing and productivity as well as our current level of unemployment.

In closing, I cannot state often enough that it is of great importance for the minister and the government seriously to consider initiating at the earliest possible date a small business policy, possibly under a small business act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

● (1750)

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since we seem to have moved along fairly well, and since it is a little late to start a new bill in the field of agriculture before six o'clock, I wonder whether we should not proceed to the adjournment debate. I see that the first two members on the program are here.

Mr. Goodale: That proposal makes sense, Mr. Speaker, but it might expedite our business at eight o'clock if we could have the motion formally on record; that is, item 34, which is the next order of business.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It is a motion for second reading. You won't gain anything by doing that.