

Government Orders

legislation are actually coming through in the community.

The last thing I wish to say, and again it deals with consumers, is that these three pieces of legislation put in some consumer protection. How many times when dealing with the big banks do people feel that they have been ripped off? I feel it all the time when I go in, although I have got a pretty good banker at home. I don't want him to be watching this and think I am talking about him. I certainly am not.

An hon. member: What was his name again?

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): What happens, Madam Speaker, is many times people feel—and it may be proper, it may not—that they have not been done right by a bank or an institution. The worst thing that can happen is for them not to have an avenue in which to explore their complaint. Many, many times there might be, out of 50 complaints, one that is founded or there might be 49. I don't know.

What these pieces of legislation does is allow for a process to be established. It actually legislates that a process be established. That process will handle consumer complaints. If the consumer is still not satisfied with the answers they get through the financial institutions, these acts allow them to complain to the superintendent. The superintendent in turn does not have any legislative rights of remedy. They really cannot do very much. But what they can do is file a report on these complaints, and hopefully the power of having negative press, negative publicity when they file a report or file a report with Parliament, will be enough to ensure that the consumers' interests are looked after by these large financial institutions. I think that is one of the most progressive pieces of this legislation because it actually sets in place a process. In and of itself it may not look like very much, but if we look at what has happened other times that these types of processes have been put up, they have been successful.

In conclusion, I would like to say that our party, the Liberal Party, supports changes to our financial institutions. We support opening up more competition, and we also support any measures that the government would put forward that would ensure that the interests of the

consumer are paramount and that processes are put in place to ensure that the consumer has a say as well.

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Madam Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech. He said that his party was supporting the bill at second reading and will look for some changes in the committee.

In his speech, the member did not touch on one of the very grave concerns that depositors and Canadians should have in general and that is the ownership of financial institutions. Banks now are very strictly controlled with respect to the amount of ownership any individual or group of individuals can own. It is 10 per cent.

Recently we have noticed that the financial institutions that have had the greatest difficulty have been the trust companies where close ownership has led to abuses. If you were to sit in on the committee, you would have heard the Superintendent of Financial Institutions explaining and saying that we only have guidelines with respect to all kinds of things, we have been unable to properly keep track of these operations. Yet now in these bills what we are doing is we are opening up the cages of the zoo and we are letting a lot of commingling go on. So I think there is a concern.

In the United States when deregulation came in, in the short run it resulted in many financial institutions, but in the long run there was a melt down. We are going along the same path. Insurance companies can own trust companies, banks can own insurance companies and they can own each other.

I want to tell you, the biggest insurance company in this country is not nearly as big as a bank. All the time they talked, when they came as witnesses before the committee, they were talking about global competition. They are not so interested in what goes on Canada, they now want to become big players international. Their focus is on the globe not at home. If you think small businesses and medium sized businesses have had a rough time in getting loans, wait till these sumo wrestlers get their focus on the world because that is where the focus is, it is global.

The member did not touch on this ownership, the possibility that one morning you will wake up and there will be only one financial institution in the country, and that is when they start setting the price.