

### *Improvement Loans*

I suggest that the actions of the government have been in the direction of building bigness at the expense of small, efficient operations. This poses a real challenge to the Minister of State (Small Business) (Mr. Marchand) to assist in reversing the trend, which has pretty well entrenched itself as a philosophy in the minds of the present government.

There is no doubt in my mind that the challenge and competition created by free enterprise through smaller and medium size businesses can serve only to revitalize the economy and to stimulate employment. This is where we should look for growth in order to solve our unemployment problems.

The irony of it is, Mr. Speaker, that small endeavours account for between 50 and 60 per cent of our employment opportunities in this country, yet they do not come in for anything close to 50 per cent consideration when controls, quotas, and tariffs are levied. Small firms go bankrupt without any sympathy on the part of the government, and with them goes an equal percentage of the number of jobs available, with a corresponding drain on the resources of the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

We have seen several examples of service and band-aid assistance as a result of travel throughout Canada by various ministers of the government who try to show some concern for the problems faced by small business. I suggest that this type of legislation is confirmation that there is no really serious concern being shown by the government; rather it indicates a continuation of the band-aid approach. We have all witnessed the fiasco of programs under DREE, ARDA, the so-called tourism program, none of which has had the long-range effect necessary to create and to stimulate employment in the private sector of our economy.

A namesake of mine, Ernst Schumacher, a British economist, pointed out some years ago in his book "Small is Beautiful" that bigness is really madness. His argument was based on the fact that we need to grow not outwards but inwards, to business of a size where everything relates, towards "technology with a human face". John Bulloch, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Businessmen, added to this premise by stating that small is more efficient, more profitable and real, and is based on the healthy outlook of competitive free enterprise.

Big business, in my opinion, leads to big government and to big labour unions. How do smaller enterprises faced with falling markets, union imposed wages, taxation and other pressures on their cost of doing business in this country as a result of government action, compete? The government should be working to introduce laws to provide small enterprises with the same advantages enjoyed by the conglomerates, laws which would help equalize competitive opportunities in purchasing, services and exports, with greater tax incentives not only to the businesses themselves but to investors. By allowing the large enterprises the heavy end of the stick we are allowing a situation to develop which will make it impossible to function democratically in this country, certainly if the trend toward bigness continues. We will become overrun with bureaucrats and centralization.

[Mr. Schumacher.]

Pollution is created by massing large numbers of people into central areas. This government has moved toward this at a steady pace. Small centres and rural developments are consistently undermined. One need only look, for instance, at the number of small post offices which were at one time the hub of a community environment and communications centre—in other words, gathering places. They are no more now as individuals move more and more into cities and into built up, congested areas. If one lives in a smaller community, even in the matter of unemployment insurance benefits one is discriminated against, since the regulations require one to apply to a specific number of companies per week for employment. Unless this is done you are automatically disqualified, so you have to move to the nearest city to conduct a search for employment. Farmers cannot keep their families on the farm, and who can blame young people for moving to places where there is less stress, less risk of failure, less pressure from form filling, regulations, and other government interference? Eventually what will happen to Canada is that the trend will not only be allowed but encouraged by the federal government.

● (1530)

It pains me to mention that even before the election of the Parti Québécois the federal government allowed a situation to develop where provincial boundaries became barriers so far as trade was concerned. Contracts for work in Quebec and in the rest of Canada were open to Quebec firms; but the same rule did not exist for other provinces wishing contracts for work within the province of Quebec. Construction workers required work permits to work in Quebec if they were not Quebecers; but Quebecers could work in other provinces of Canada without permits. The provinces of Alberta and British Columbia have suffered particularly in the awarding of government contracts, the facts of which were clearly illustrated by my colleague, the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington), in his speech on this bill on March 28.

It is perhaps the hallmark of those on the other side of this House when they mention positive steps taken by the government, that they speak in terms of percentages and statistics. This proves to me that they have lost touch and sight in regard to people, and perhaps points out that they regard the inequities of the system as small when they are applied to small businesses. This is just not so. The businesses may be small, but the problems are enormous.

To go back to the Post Office as an example, my constituency is partly rural with the problems already mentioned of closures and inept deliveries; but part of my riding is also in the city of Calgary where people living in residential areas do not receive proper mail service at all. This situation has been going on for over three years. All representations to a succession of Postmasters General have resulted in no viable improvement in spite of the multimillion dollar new facility which has been constructed in the city of Calgary.

Smaller post offices are manned by dedicated people providing a service at ridiculously low rates of pay. Rural route contractors are in the same position, and have been for years.