

Small Businesses Loans Act

the Hon. Member if he has any comments on the fact that not only are more women going into small businesses, but, indeed, they have a very good success rate. Yet they often find that there is much more discrimination, if you like, or difficulty in getting loans or financing from the banks. I wonder if the Hon. Member would care to comment on those points?

Mr. Weiner: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for the question. I do want to comment. First, I hope the Hon. Member will excuse my use of the term "businessman". I do it without any malice, in the same way as I might refer to a "chairman" when I should refer to a "chairperson". Perhaps we should have a new vocabulary which incorporates those terms.

I would like to relate a true story. My wife is an active member of the business community. She is a very successful businesswoman in her own right. She runs a very large travel agency in Dollard-des-Ormeaux. But I do have the feeling that in any relationship she has with her bankers, there is still that unspoken suggestion: "Well, why don't you drop in with your husband? Why don't you show me your husband's statement at the same time? Why don't you use his assets as a back-up for what you are asking?" She does not want to do that. She has made it in her own right. She has her own assets and her own equity to show. She is able to stand on her own feet.

I think this is a problem somewhat similar to that which my ethnic constituents are facing. We have to come to grips with the reality that we still do not have true equality, that we must continue to work for it. The positive and affirmative action which we need in that sense, with proper incentives and initiatives, must be taken here as well. I can only say that I have not yet had the pleasure of dealing with a female bank manager. Perhaps they exist, but they too, like the ethnics, must have their rightful place in this society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We shall now resume debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with this opportunity to speak briefly in the debate on Bill C-23.

Mr. Speaker, I am rather surprised the Government should have waited so long to table Bill C-23 in the House. I see the Minister across the way and I am sure he would have preferred to table the Bill before the "well ran dry". I am positive, Mr. Speaker, but I suppose he does not have enough influence on . . . He may not have enough money either—I do not know since I am not familiar with his personal finances. But he definitely does not have enough influence on his colleague, the Government House Leader, because we know, Mr. Speaker, that the well has run dry, as I mentioned earlier, and that instead of tabling this Bill at an earlier date and helping small businesses, this Government preferred to help the big U.S. multinationals by spending much of this session on the Investment Canada Bill. Why set a higher priority on Investment Canada when we could have been helping small businesses?

I would like the Minister to answer that later on, Mr. Speaker, because it is very important for us to know what the Government's commitment is to small business.

Perhaps the Minister could also indicate why the Government is so keen on having the Investment Canada Act, which I think will reduce opportunities for small business. When small businesses, with their very limited resources, must compete with the multinationals, obviously things are going to be very difficult for them. I am convinced that my Progressive Conservative colleagues in the House will agree, since they see themselves as the friends of small business.

However, Mr. Speaker, we know this is not so. They are friendly with big business, with the big U.S. corporations, and especially with the U.S. Government, and, as we know, they have very little concern for Canadian small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, while we are on the subject, I think we should remember the promises this Government made during the election campaign, promises with respect to small business.

● (1240)

[*English*]

I have with me a document, Mr. Speaker, containing promises made by the Conservative Party. I am sure you will recall that the Conservative Party made quite a few promises during the last election campaign. We in the Liberal Party have tallied up some 338 promises, but of course we know there are far more, such as the bouncing rubber cheques to producers of Quebec and so forth. If you add them all up there are probably 500 promises.

I have here a list of Conservative promises to the small business community. It is an authentic list because it was prepared by the Prime Minister's office. I am sure you will agree that it is a very authentic document, as authentic as the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) would like it to be. Let us review this list in order to familiarize ourselves with all the promises the Conservatives made to the small business community, recognizing that five months later, once the funds had run dry under the Small Businesses Loans Act, only then did the Government choose to introduce a Bill in this regard. It chose first of all to help out its big business American friends with the Investment Canada Bill and worried about small business much, much later. Of course, that is not what they said during the election campaign. Here is what the Government said. It was going to reduce the burden of excessive regulation and reporting requirements. I do not know what the Tories have done yet to satisfy that particular election promise, which was made on July 26 by the Prime Minister himself, then Leader of the Opposition.

The Tories also said they would rationalize and improve access to a variety of small business assistance programs offered by the federal Government. Again, nothing done. They would review Government purchasing policy and ensure that small and medium size enterprises obtain a fair share of government business. Another empty Conservative promise. They would encourage capital investment in small and