

Depositors Compensation

After the legislative committee finally met on October 28, the Bill was reported back to the House on November 7. That, surely, cannot be considered an extended examination. After being reported back to the House on November 7, the Bill sat on the Order Paper. The Government did nothing until November 22 when it brought it on late on a Friday afternoon for 14 minutes—

Mr. Gauthier: Fourteen lousy minutes.

Miss Nicholson: —before Private Member's hour was called. Since November 22 it has not been called until today. Now the Minister has the effrontery to try to imply that we have extended this debate. This is the most outrageous thing I have heard in a very long time.

Mr. Marchi: The Minister is laughing.

Miss Nicholson: Yes, it is all very funny to the Minister, but it is not funny to the taxpayers who are being asked to shell out money—

Mr. Penner: That's right, and they are damned mad.

Miss Nicholson: —to nameless, faceless individuals.

The amendment which stands in my name on the Order Paper, which is what this debate is supposed to be about, provides that the names of those who make application for reimbursement under the terms of Bill C-79 be published in the Public Accounts of Canada. This has been our position since the outset. Our Leader introduced an amendment to this effect at second reading of Bill C-79. I will also point out that the Government introduced closure while we were still debating that amendment. Therefore, we never had a full debate on second reading of this Bill either.

We have had a number of opportunities to elaborate on why we think it essential for taxpayers to know who will be benefiting from this \$875 million expenditure. I will merely summarize these very briefly today. We have had no answers in the past, and with the Minister's ridiculous performance this afternoon, we certainly have not had an answer today.

● (1600)

The Bill is meant to pay off uninsured depositors in the Canadian Commercial Bank, the Northland Bank and the Canadian Commercial Bank Mortgage Investment Corporation, which also recently went into liquidation. The insured depositors, those whose deposits were less than \$60,000, which is the limit on deposit insurance, have already been paid. Those who had a right to payment have been paid. This Bill provides for the so-called sophisticated investor with deposits over \$60,000 in one institution, who would normally have no right to compensation, to receive *ex gratia* payments if they come forward and ask for it.

The Government wants Parliament to authorize *ex gratia* payments, to be paid with taxpayer's money to the tune of \$865 million, but these people are to remain nameless and faceless. The taxpayer has a right to know. On October 4 the

Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. Nielsen) said that the public has a right to know how its tax dollars are spent, that public funds are at all times subject to the scrutiny of Parliament and that the whole purpose of this place is the management of taxpayers dollars. We on this side are in full agreement with that statement. We differ with the Government in that we feel that the principle must be applied consistently.

Mr. Brisco: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hesitate to intrude on the Hon. Member's statement because she has risen in a state of righteous indignation or unctuous indignation, I am not sure which. However, she quoted a figure of \$865 million—I am not quite sure—was that the figure you quoted? You were out by \$10 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member is raising a point of debate.

Mr. Brisco: It is a point of fact.

Mr. Rossi: Go back to sleep.

Miss Nicholson: The figure in the Bill is \$875 million.

Mr. Brisco: You did not say that. You said \$865 million.

Miss Nicholson: This Bill deals with former clients of former banks in liquidation and now being dealt with under the Winding-up Act. It simply defeats logic how the Minister can claim that the provisions of the Bank Act regarding privacy for depositors for current clients apply to former depositors of a wound-up institution who are asking the Government for *ex gratia* payments. These people have to make a formal application to get the money. They will not get it automatically as a bank depositor, and once they begin that application process papers will begin floating throughout the Departments and their names will certainly become known sooner or later. What on earth can the Government possibly hope to gain by stifling information to which taxpayers have a right and which will become public eventually?

In fact, the Government does not have a legal or moral leg to stand on. It is in an untenable position which is at odds with the stated desire of the Government, which we share, to promote confidence in our financial system. Withholding information from those who have a right to it, from those who are footing the bill, is not conducive to confidence building. We hope that the Government, in the interest of building confidence and restoring its own credibility in the entire matter of bank failures, will approve this amendment.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak to the amendment in the Bill presently before the House. In her opening statements, the Minister of State for Finance (Mrs. McDougall) made several interesting observations. First, she claimed that the Opposition has prevented speedy passage of the Bill. That is not quite true because it is the Government, with an overwhelming number of Members in the House and control over the agenda of the House, that determines what is introduced for discussion in the House and in the committees. Surely, with all of its Members, if the