

Bills of Exchange Act

Canadians will not enjoy the full protection of the legislation. We should like to hear the minister's assurance that the government intends to bring this legislation into force and that the act will be proclaimed.

In conclusion, sir, the minister said this legislation will protect consumers from unscrupulous operators who would prey on them. These operators usually take the form of door-to-door solicitors who prey upon unsuspecting housewives in the lower income brackets, generally speaking, or upon old age pensioners and those who really cannot protect themselves because of educational handicaps or other circumstances beyond their control. The minister referred to an incident involving a lightning rod salesman. We must protect our people from these successors of the lightning rod salesman, the peddlers of magazines, encyclopedias, roofing, aluminum windows and roof repair jobs—in short, the peddlers of those things which can be bought legitimately on the open market at competitive prices. We know the consequences of some of those promotions. Hon. members and the minister may remember the knitting machine operation which swept through Ottawa in 1968 and affected some 300 innocent consumers. If the minister does not remember it, I will send the necessary materials over and remind him.

I will not take up the time of the House in going over the details now. It is from such operators as these that our consumers must be protected. In that regard, we hope this legislation will be effective. We hope the minister will explain to the House why he is not prepared immediately to implement the amendments to the act before Parliament upon their passage through the House and the other place. I think the House deserves to know when the government proposes to proclaim the legislation, because the need for it is greater now than it was in 1967 when the minister, in his capacity as co-chairman of the joint committee on consumer credit, brought in the recommendation in the first instance. We hope it will not take another three years before the legislation is implemented.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): Mr. Speaker, there is always a temptation when a long overdue measure is introduced to praise the minister for bringing it forward. However, I will try to resist that temptation and control myself.

An hon. Member: Better call a doctor.

Mr. Saltsman: I say that particularly because of the long time we have waited for this measure. My colleague, the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters), has been waiting for seven years for a measure such as this to come before the House. He tells me he has no ill feelings because the minister has stolen his private members' bill. He only regrets that the minister did not do this earlier.

This bill perhaps should be subtitled, "The mills of the Liberals grind slowly bill", or, "The what-took-you-so-long bill". Although the minister in his opening remarks pointed out the obvious merits of the bill, and I gather it has unanimous support from all parties and members, it is really remarkable that the government should have delayed from year to year the introduction of this rather straightforward and welcome change. The minister's position merely points out how long it takes to get anything done here. Our young people today criticize Parliament for its slowness. They contend that Parliament takes too long to act even when it is conceded that the people will derive benefit from what is to be done. In this instance, Parliament is not to be blamed. It is the government that has taken so long to act.

Something else has emerged from the minister's remarks. The federal government's initiative in the field of consumer credit or other fields has a great effect in the country. The minister said that if all the provinces do not go along with this legislation, it will not be completely effective. I think the provinces would be very foolish not to support this measure which has such obvious merit. Now that the federal government has taken the lead, I hope the provinces will follow it. One or two provinces may not follow the federal lead, but that will not diminish the importance of federal leadership in this field. Those provinces have the right to dissent, and their elected representatives will ultimately answer to their people in an election.

I had the privilege of serving on the committee of which the present Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs was the very able co-chairman. Probably it was one of the best committees the House of Commons established. It did very valuable work and prepared a report, part of which has been implemented. The other part has not been. It is regrettable that the co-chairman, the present minister, who played such an important part in the work of the committee should be so reluctant to implement some of the fundamental aspects of that report. Because, Mr.