

How do we do this and how do we expand the present program? This is not only making capital available as the act expresses, but expanding the scope of this legislation in order to make working capital, which is the grease that makes the small business turn. How do we expand the working capital availability within the small business community in order that they can hire those people? We will be talking in the future about how we want to have site training and on-the-job skills development and retraining so that it gets directly to the person affected who comes off the UI or the welfare roll.

• (1350)

As I said earlier, how do we simplify the legislation to make it workable for the small business communities in our country? Those are the major issues we will be addressing at the committee level.

Before my time is up, let me address some of the changes that are proposed to Bill C-99 the legislation that is before us. First, as I read the changes, there are two thresholds that a person in the small business community has to pass in order to qualify under this act. The first threshold is: Does he qualify as a small-business entrepreneur?

The exclusions are professionals and farming. Farming is understandable. I will come back to professionals in a minute. My colleague here is quite familiar with the Farm Improvement Loans Act that meets the needs of the farming community. Financial insurance is an exclusion under the act. Real estate entrepreneurs are exclusions under the act as are religious and charitable services.

Let me first deal with three areas that I think should be reviewed at the committee stage. The first area is the professional atmosphere. If we really, truly believe that we are trying to create jobs in this country through this legislation, then I think it behoves us to include those people in professions, particularly doctors, lawyers and dentists. I do not think they should be excluded, because they are employers and can employ more people than they are presently employing. Dentists, doctors in private practice and lawyers run small business concerns that can employ more people.

The law firm that I was a partner in employed some 70 people. That is considered to be a very high employer. Why would they not be included? The law firms I worked with had the same problems as any business concern. They had problems with working capital. Why do we

exclude the financial insurance industry and real estate business enterprises? I know for a fact that real estate businesses employ a great many people. They have a broad range of skills that can develop a very highly qualified, productive person in our economy. They have talents, perhaps, in the sales field that are so fundamentally required in this country.

I know my time is short and it is getting close to the hour. However, I just want to emphasize that we will be making these recommendations to help the small business community in our country. We will not prevent the passage of this legislation. We on this side of the House have always supported good legislation that this government has brought forward. Again I compliment the minister for bringing this forward at a time when it is so necessary for the small business enterprise system in our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on this bill.

[*English*]

I want to thank my colleague for his insightful remarks. He obviously knows a great deal about the small and medium-sized business sector. We support this particular legislation because we see it as a step forward. We also believe that the government might have gone further and that there are a number of other areas it might have addressed.

I want to emphasize that most of the new jobs have been created recently as a result of the contributions of small and medium-size enterprises. It is often forgotten by Canadians just what they contribute to the quality of life of our nation. They have created more jobs than any other sector. In fact there are figures of 86 per cent of job creation. It obviously depends upon the definitions. They are an important contributor to jobs for Canadians.

There is another sector that is often overlooked. They are an important contributor as well to research and development. If one looks at the type of research and development that has been undertaken by small and medium sized businesses, if one studies carefully the various projects they have under way and looks at the amount of investment they put into research and development and the returns on that investment, they compare extremely favourably and some people would argue much better than larger enterprises.