

**Mr. Basford:** It took the Trudeau government to get around to doing it.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Since 1908, we have had 41 or 42 years of Liberal government and 21 years of Conservative government during which time the co-operative movement has appeared year in and year out to plead, ask, beg and present briefs. The co-operative representatives always received a pat on the head and been told what a great thing the movement is, but they always got the run-around. There is no particular credit to the present administration that this bill is now before us. After the length of time that has passed, the situation has become so inordinately bad that somebody had to move. I do not think it is incumbent upon the minister or his colleagues to brag about the fact that they are the ones who finally did it.

We agree with the bill in general and will support it. There are several improvements we think it needs. It is our hope the minister and whatever committee the bill goes to, will listen carefully and with sympathy to the suggestions made by people from the co-operative movement and Members of Parliament. We hope the minister will see fit to accept what we feel will be improvements to it.

There are at least three provisions in this bill which my colleague will deal with at greater length. These fly in the face of the very principles of the co-operative movement which the minister outlined. The bill is designed to cover co-operatives doing business in two or more provinces. This is what the co-operative movement has been requesting for all these years. Provincial legislation is fairly adequate for any co-operative that confines its activities to one province. When membership and operations cross boundaries federal legislation is needed.

Particularly since the end of the last world war, co-operatives have become provincial co-operatives with activities in several provinces. For this reason, the bill is long overdue. The co-operative movement considers a federal act is necessary, not to replace provincial legislation but to complement it. This legislation is also necessary to protect the name "co-operative". We are all aware of the many instances in which the name has been abused and misused by those who would try to take advantage of a name that is held in high esteem by the public. For example, one can think of some building co-operatives which use the name to take advantage of greater access to the people to whom a builder wants to sell or rent his buildings.

The co-operative movement has been, to put it mildly, very patient. No doubt we should be grateful for that patience as well as the fact that they have not been much more militant than one would otherwise expect. In this regard I need only quote from an article in the "Co-op Commentary" number 23, under the heading "Studied Indifference". In this article it is pointed out that there are many things not available to co-operatives which might be available under federal law. Let me quote from this article:

If, when meeting the cabinet committee last week, the CUC and CCC needed justification for their use of the phrase

#### *Canada Co-operatives Association Bill*

"Studied Indifference" in describing the attitude of Canadian federal governments they need have looked no further than this:

Incredibly, in Canada federally, there is no protection in law against misuse of the word "co-operative" in a company name.

There is no federal legislation limiting a member to one vote. The general meeting of members cannot take responsibility for enacting bylaws.

The principle of patronage returns is not recognized.

Bylaws do not have the force of a contract between the member and the co-operative.

These are some of the illustrations given by the co-operative movement itself in this article entitled "Studied Indifference" to indicate how the co-operative movement has been treated by successive federal governments.

• (4:30 p.m.)

This bill should not be looked upon as just another piece of legislation affecting one area of business enterprise. In fact, I believe that in an early clause, perhaps in the clause defining a co-operative, this bill should enshrine the principles to which co-operatives adhere. I am disappointed that the bill does not do this. I hope the minister and the committee will consider such an addition to the bill. The bill should recognize that co-operatives are something more than and different from ordinary business enterprises. I believe a full and proper interpretation of what co-operatives are should be spelled out in the provisions of the bill. The bill should clearly say that a co-operative is an association of persons working together to provide themselves with goods and services; that it has a different set of values as an enterprise, and that it operates to meet the common needs or goals of a group of people who voluntarily associate themselves in a co-op. In addition, it should say that the profit motive is not one of the principles a good co-operative follows.

There are still people in this country who would like to impede, prohibit or destroy parts or all of the co-operative movement. One has only to think of the Equitable Income Tax Foundation that comes from underneath its rock periodically to wage war on the co-operative movement. The most recent instances have been during and since the Carter report on taxation and the government's white paper on tax changes. The battle is not over yet and has not been completely won by the co-operative movement. There are many struggles awaiting co-operatives. Their growth is still impeded in too many ways. The principle of business for service is still not sufficiently recognized as opposed to business only for profit. I hope that this legislation will be a major step in assisting the co-operative movement across Canada to achieve this end. This bill can apply only to a limited number of co-operatives. No one should think for one moment that there will be a stampede by hundreds of co-operatives, the day after this bill is passed, to become incorporated under it.

Many co-operatives will not want to, will not need to or will not be able to incorporate. But there are for example, in the first instance, the national type co-ops—I am thinking of the Interprovincial Co-operative Association—which will likely want to and be able to incorpo-