

Loans Acts Amendments

difficult period, they will go bankrupt like other people, and bankruptcies may be more numerous than we think.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with another part of this legislation, namely the legislation amending the Small Businesses Loans Act. Since I came to this House, I have often heard my colleague, the hon. member for Compton, (Mr. Latulippe), speak on that subject. In fact he knows what he is talking about, being an industrialist himself who has started at the bottom rung of the ladder. He has often asked that the \$25,000 loan provided for in the act be considerably raised to allow small businesses to expand and get established in areas where there are no labour intensive industry. On that subject, Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) made a much more eloquent plea than I could make myself, when he stated the following in the House on July 11, 1973:

• (2120)

Canada's smaller and medium sized enterprises and entrepreneurs form a key part of our Canadian economy. They employ an estimated five million people, almost 60 per cent of our entire labour force. Two-thirds of Canadians work for businesses employing fifteen persons or less. Most of these businesses are owned and managed by Canadians and provide a means of developing greater Canadian participation in our country's growth. Small enterprises are often the most efficient way of producing goods and services to meet Canada's particular needs.

I endorse that statement.

The small business unit has a flexibility to meet the local production and distribution requirements of Canada's various regions.

In addition to their significant economic role, small businesses make an important contribution to the development of Canada's social fabric. They foster the development of self-reliance, enterprise and are closely identified with community life.

How true that is!

A well balanced economy should, therefore, consist of healthy small businesses as well as larger units where scale of output is necessary to be internationally competitive.

Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with the minister. Words are not enough, we must act. The Minister of Finance might say: That is what we are trying to do by increasing the guaranteed amount from \$25,000 to \$50,000. That will do some good, but could it be too late? Because of the current inflation, will the amount of \$50,000 really be worth \$50,000 or could it not rather be considered as \$25,000 twenty years ago? That is the question we must ask ourselves and that needs to be answered.

During 20 odd years, members of all parties have very frequently—and sincerely, I hope—about industrial decentralization. We had to decentralize industry and all parties included this in their program. I think that nobody had enough faith in this policy to follow it efficiently and intensively. If we want to work to improve the social climate of our country, which is getting worse everyday, I think that one of the most effective measures that we could take immediately would be to decentralize industry by bringing it to the rural centres, where there is an increasing number of qualified people who are able to meet the needs of the industries who will accept to settle in these centres. This would allow our young people to build family houses in unpolluted areas where there is space. This would allow them to have a normal family life because they would be able to settle in areas where the

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

lack of air and space is not a problem yet. In this way, we should be solving a very difficult problem, that of space for those married couples who still wish to have children.

When I visit the big cities, it disappoints me to see multiple unit buildings and, when I visit either relatives or friends, it makes me sad to see that in these two, three, four or five apartment buildings, space has been provided for the refrigerator, the range, and all types of electrical appliances, but there is no room for human beings. There is one bedroom and another small room for a baby. When the latter arrives, it is realized that there is no more space. Steps must be taken accordingly, and God knows how many are advertised on TV, over the radio and in newspapers!

Mr. Speaker, I still believe in the divine institution which the family is. We must try not to limit its possibilities to big business whims, but to accommodate incomes of families to their needs so that they may fulfil their task and remain themselves in this modern social world. Such an institution must remain the basis of our society, as otherwise, like other countries which have overlooked this, we will witness chaos which does not profit anyone.

That is why we must increase those small businesses loans, but for heaven sake's let us put an end to all the red tape that discourages those who want to use them. They have to overcome so many obstacles that they are disgusted right from the start and they give up after a few tries. There are qualified men who can operate a business or an industry, who have that natural ability but and all they can do is to sit back and say: It is no use trying; they make it so difficult and there are so many problems of all kinds that we are discouraged at the very beginning.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance who is responsible for this legislation to encourage the banks to grant loans to those small businesses. We are not asking them for a gift, but a loan. I am convinced that the higher the interest rates, the more profits they make. To my mind, the Minister of Finance has a very heavy responsibility and he must intervene if need be, by introducing legislation so that an end might be put to those usurious interest rates. There is nothing to keep Canada from taking the first step. Some will say to me: Dear God, it is easy to talk about it, but we depend on the international market! Perhaps, but if only we were true to ourselves in Canada, we could at least try it out, try to be masters in our own country, and stop acting like sheep. For once we would show initiative, without jeopardizing anything, and do something concrete.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, since my time has almost expired, I should have liked to speak a bit more of the provisions of the act concerning fishermen. I know that this bill was introduced in the same spirit for the fishermen, and we know how difficult their work is, and the hardships they encounter every day.

I trust my remarks will at least spur on those who are responsible financially. I can assure the Minister of Finance of this: he need not hesitate if he wants to go ahead and, as I said a while ago, if he wants to grab the bull by the horns, I shall help him and grab its hoofs.