

Government Orders

As they opened these up, the businesses took off and prospered. But then we had a downturn in the economy. We know what went into effect on January 1, 1989. These real Canadian entrepreneurs who were attempting to attract American tourists to Canada and working for the last six years on this tourist development are the kind of business people the government claims it wants to help. It spent \$1.2 million on a competitiveness study by an American it could have purchased the same at a book store for \$40. They are going to spend tens of millions of dollars to study our Canadian economy, but they do not want to hear about free trade and the impact of that, the GST or the Canadian and U.S. interest rate spread or the high dollar.

• (1350)

These tourism operators could explain to the government what is happening without the cost of this \$1.2 million. Yesterday, they had a notice of eviction delivered to them signed by the sheriff of Lambton County. I have a copy of it right here. It gave them just a few days to vacate.

This afternoon I had a note delivered to me in the House by the tenants of some of those stores who have thriving businesses who also have to vacate. The notices were delivered by the sheriff on behalf of the Federal Business Development Bank, which is willing to force them out of these facilities and close down the businesses these tenants are operating. It is completely unacceptable.

I have to ask, what will this act do in a case like this where these tenants have invested their lifetime savings in making these businesses go, competing against the free trade agreement and the GST and the high Canadian dollar, but are surviving and prospering and had their merchandise in place for the Christmas rush.

This is unacceptable. I ask this House to stop and take another look at this bill, the Bankruptcy Act, and tell us how it is going to help these tenants. How is it going to help these entrepreneurs who are being forced out just at the start of the Christmas rush, when they have put their lifetime savings into building up these businesses that are attracting tourists to Canada and then having the rug pulled out from under them by the government of this nation and the policies it put in place.

Mr. Bill Kempling (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board and Minister of State (Finance)): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on Bill C-22. At the outset I want to commend the minister and the committee for the pre-study it did on Bill C-22. I think it was a wise move on the part of the minister, and of course there was some excellent work done by the members of the committee. They are all to be commended.

The fact that the minister accepted, I believe, 16 of the 22 amendments they suggested to the bill is an indication of how much he thought of their work.

In the limited time available to me I want to talk a little bit about super priority. I wonder if many members realize where this all began. We had a previous bill before us on bankruptcy. I believe it was in the early 1980s. The minister I believe was the Hon. Judy Erola. The bill was before committee and it was sort of flip-flopping through the House. There was not too much attention being paid to it. All of sudden Maislin Transport in Quebec went bankrupt.

Members familiar with the transport industry will know the name Maislin, an over the road company. It had bought into a transport company in the United States and as a result of that investment and some other difficult times, it found itself faced with bankruptcy.

The employees of that company had cheques bounce all over Montreal and the various communities where they had their depots. At that time the minister brought in super priority. She suggested a \$3,000 per employee super priority. We asked her at the time where she got the \$3,000 figure. At that time the average wage in a bankruptcy across Canada was \$250. Why the \$3,000? She said that was the semi-monthly wage of a machinery salesman. I could not see the connection. I don't know how many machinery salesmen there are in Canada as opposed to transport truck drivers and numerous other employees, but that is the origin of super priority.

There were other developments as a result of the super priority. The banks felt endangered to some degree. Looking at super priority, my own personal preference would be this 10 cents per employee per week. I think that is the least cost involved and I think