

*Bank Act*

tee is still wrestling and with which we still have to deal. It is a difficult problem and I am still not satisfied that we have sufficient information in that area.

In the field of financial disclosure, our party made a number of amendments, some of which were accepted by the government. We said to the government that we are incorporating banks into Canada under this legislation, yet we are allowing them to disclose less information than they are required to disclose in their own jurisdictions. There is a patent absurdity in passing that kind of legislation. I am glad to say that the government moved part way toward accepting the need for a little sunlight in understanding the affairs of our own chartered banks and newly incorporated institutions.

● (1650)

I should like to refer to one area where the minister did not move. We have had discussions about it but I remain unconvinced that there is any reason why the government should not require the banks to tell us, in terms of their foreign activities, how much money they are lending to particular countries and the agencies of those countries. Loans to foreign countries and their agencies is a vital question of interest to the Canadian public. It should be of interest to the Inspector General of Banks.

One area where the government is in danger of failing us and where our legislation may be very inadequate is the area of the power and ability of the Inspector General to acquire information and oversee the foreign activities of Canadian chartered banks. I have many concerns about the office of the Inspector General which I have expressed in committee. For example, I am concerned that most of the representations made by the Inspector General, in my view, were made on behalf of the banks. Also, for example, I am concerned that the budget of the office of the Inspector General is paid entirely by chartered banks in the form of a levy which is part and parcel of the Bank Act.

Just as much as I am concerned about those two matters, I think my party is deeply concerned about the fact that, if we look at the asset growth of the banks from 1967, the asset growth of the banks in Canada has been great, but the asset growth of the banks in foreign countries has been more than great. It has been quite extraordinary, to the extent that now the Bank of Nova Scotia has nearly 50 per cent of its assets overseas, the Royal Bank has 35 per cent and other banks are in the same vicinity. It is in that area that I think we are in danger of passing legislation which does not give us adequate information and adequate protection.

Why should we not know whether or not Canadian chartered banks have made extensive loans to a foreign country when the international relations between Canada and that country are of great concern? Why should we not know whether Canadian banks are exposed in Iran and to what extent they are exposed in Iran? If they are extensively exposed, should we not know that as Canadian consumers? Should I as a Canadian consumer not know that the bank to which I am lending money in the form of savings deposits has

extensive interests in Chile, South Africa, Iran or any part of the world? For the life of me I cannot see why the old chestnut of the banks being required to disclose this information would be destroying the confidentiality of the client-banker relationship. How can we move from the comparison of an individual person and his bank, where the principle of confidentiality is admittedly important, to the relationship between a chartered bank and the government of a foreign country? It seems to me that extends the notion of confidentiality from one particular case to a very general, wide, political application. It seems to me at some point the principle of confidentiality is superseded by the principle of disclosure. I hope very much that the minister will reconsider that question, because I think it is an extremely important point.

I think we have made some progress in the area of section 178 where we discussed the priority which should be given to producers of agricultural products, including cattlemen. We put forward a proposal to the government which was accepted. Many members of the Conservative, Liberal and New Democratic parties spoke and participated. It seems to me that it was a very healthy discussion.

Finally, I should like to take advantage of the presence in the House today of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Regan). I have written twice to his colleague, the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. Bussières), indicating that our attitude toward the passage of the Bank Act must be affected by what is happening to labour relations in the banks and the activities of our chartered banks. The Minister of Labour will know that since the decision of the Canada labour relations board in the Bank of Nova Scotia's case, where it was decided that a single bank could be organized and was a satisfactory unit for the purpose of bargaining, there has been a drive conducted by different unions under different auspices in an attempt to organize various branches of different chartered banks.

Also the minister will be aware that in case after case, but particularly in cases involving the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the Canada labour relations board has taken not simply a dim view of the activities of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, but has specifically gone through the activities of the chairman of the board, the president and the chief executive officer of that bank and indicated that there was a systematic attempt, on the part of the directing officials of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, to subvert the rights of employees as expressed in the Canada Labour Code.

I raise the same point which I raised at second reading. How can we in this House be expected to give what are essentially charters to these institutions which give them a licence to print money? I do not know of a chartered bank in Canada which has taken a loss recently. I do not know of one which expects its assets to grow less than phenomenally. I ask the minister to review not only the reports of the Canada labour relations board but also the recent report of the advisory committee on the status of women. I ask him to consider whether it would be advisable to establish a small specialized task force in his department to examine the question of labour relations in banks and whether he would deem it advisable to call in the