

Government Orders

Why else when time and again on the whole question of bank service charges and trust company service charges when we cried out to have some ombudsman appointed who could look out for the interest of consumers, that idea was never followed through by the government? It was not interested in it.

It said: "Oh well, the superintendent of financial institutions would look out for that". The superintendent of financial institutions is more interested in the solvency of the institutions, not in ordinary consumers being very concerned about the way they are gouged in the marketplace with bank service charges.

It seems to me that as they move toward building these giant financial institutions that they want to build, in fact the interests of Canadians fall farther and farther behind.

These institutions began with us. Now they want to look to other interests, not the interests of Canadians. Pure profit is all that motivates their decisions.

It seems to me that they are destroying national markets to restore global markets. On that question, I have to ask: Where is the social responsibility of the financial institutions in this country? Where is their sense of social responsibility?

I saw one of the big banks in this country. We are all hearing horror stories of banks moving in on farmers, closing in on small businesses and demanding repayment in tough times. How did they treat Campeau Corporation? They forgave. They wrote off \$80 million. The National Bank wrote off \$80 million. How do they treat the small business person?

• (1600)

An hon. member: Student loans.

Mr. Rodriguez: Student loans. They are tough, real tough. Here are the banks. What contribution do they make to affordable housing in this country? They can make profits on affordable housing, but they can make bigger profits by lending to those risky things that Campeau Corporation got itself into. Pure profit.

I ask the question: What is the social responsibility? Here is a banking system that could find a \$1 million bonus for a horse that wins the Triple Crown of Canadian racing, the Bank of Montreal. Ivestia won the three

prime races in this country, and for doing that the owners of that horse get \$1 million from the Bank of Montreal.

Where is the social responsibility? Where do we see it reflected? Do we see it in affordable housing? Do we see it in the training of Canadians in post-secondary education? Do we see the banks participating in any kind of training programs? Do we see them investing any of the hundreds of millions of dollars, the fantastic profits that they have been garnering in the last year or two? Have we seen any of this?

An hon. member: The clerks pay more in taxes than they do.

Mr. Rodriguez: The member says that the clerks pay more in taxes than some of these banks do, which is probably correct, but do we see any sense of community responsibility or social responsibility? No.

I cannot be so sanguine as to run in and say: "This is fine; you can do this". I have to start ringing the warning bells that this government is headed in the wrong direction. It should stop and reflect somewhat on where it is headed.

I want to ask another question. Government members have made a great big thing about the ownership of banks. They said that no individual or group can own more than 10 per cent of the shares of a bank. Does that cover a father with 10 per cent of a bank and a son with 10 per cent? Is that permitted? I ask that question. Can a father own 10 per cent of a bank and the son own 10 per cent of the same bank? I mean one family would have 20 per cent of the ownership of a bank.

What is the direction toward ownership of banks? We have seen the move with respect to schedule B banks coming in from the United States. They are going to be able to do all the things that schedule A banks do, yet they are not covered by the same rules that apply to schedule A banks. Canadians are covered by one set of rules. Americans are covered by a looser set of rules. The whole question of ownership needs to be looked at. We ought to look at the way ownership rules apply.

I get the distinct impression that as the pillars of the financial institution or the financial world in this country collapse the power is being shifted into the ministry, into the minister's lap. This causes grave concerns.