

Chairman W. H. Moore, M.P.

And Members of

The Banking and Commerce Committee

Canadian House of Commons.

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members:

This Brief is entered on behalf of the Canadian Retail Federation, which I have the honour to represent.

In direct membership and through affiliated trade organizations, the Canadian Retail Federation represents every type of retailing in Canada—from the small independent merchant to the large national department stores and chains.

As you no doubt know, there are in Canada no less than 125,000 retail stores. These employ more than 600,000 people, and it may fairly be stated that—including the families of persons employed by retail stores—about 1,500,000 Canadians depend for a livelihood upon the business of retail merchandising.

Thousands of Canadian manufacturers, furthermore, both large and small, depend for the distribution of their products on the Canadian retailers' enterprise and efficiency.

Throughout all your constituencies, the retail merchants are owners or lessees of the most valuable real estate; are among the most substantial taxpayers as regards both local and federal levies; sponsor all worthy causes; and, are active in public affairs. In short, they try to be good citizens.

I should add that the Canadian Retail Federation is a non-political body. We have among our members adherents of all parties. We share with Canadians in all walks of life the desire for a continuance of prosperity, the belief that we can safely be left free to conduct our own affairs, hope for the continued maintenance of private enterprise, and a devotion to the freedom which our forefathers established here.

I have already pointed out that retail business in Canada directly provides employment for some 600,000 persons, and that a much larger number than this depends on it for a livelihood. We have—in common with all of our fellow citizens—a vital interest in making possible employment for everyone after the war. We shall ourselves be spending many millions of dollars when labour and materials become available on rehabilitation of all kinds. We have not in recent years been able to keep our plants either in the best of condition or as up-to-date as we should like them to be. We need new lighting, new display fixtures, new trucks and handling equipment, new store fronts, and—in many cases—new stores. The satisfaction of all these needs will employ thousands of workers in a great many industries over a period of years. But more important is the fact that maintenance of employment everywhere, in our manufacturing and in large sections of our agricultural industries, will in a very large measure depend on the skill and efficiency with which goods are distributed over the retail counters of this country.

We visualize the revision of The Bank Act as a measure which will assist in the maintenance of continuous employment for all, and a satisfactory level of national income.

We believe that there is no banking system stronger than our own; and that the strength of the Canadian banking system is one of our greatest national assets. For ten years, from 1929 to 1939, the people of this Dominion experienced a long and almost unbroken spell of hard times. But it is within the knowledge of all of us that, although Canada (greatly dependent on the sale of her exports in world markets) is especially vulnerable to depression at any time; she did in fact experience a smaller shrinkage of income during the nineteen-thirties than that which occurred in the supposedly less vulnerable United States; and, although great numbers of Canadians experienced hardship then, there was less widespread suffering here than occurred among the people of the United States.