

*Government Orders*

small business sector that keeps all those community activities going and provides leadership.

As well, perhaps most important in this era of free trade and increasing foreign control of our economy, still fully 98 per cent of small businesses are Canadian-owned. I think that is just one more reason that it behooves all of us to support the small business sector.

This bill is essentially housekeeping. It cleans up the act, provides some amendments and extends the period of the act. What bothers me somewhat in this debate is the government claiming that this bill represents its commitment to small business and that it represents the commitment of the Progressive Conservative Party to small business.

I say to you, Madam Speaker, that small business has started to see this government's commitment, or claims of having a commitment, as a joke. I would like to outline the reasons that small business is starting to feel more and more that, in fact, this commitment is not only a joke but a sick joke.

First, the whole tilt of economic policy by this government since it was elected in 1984 has been very decidedly in favour of big business at the expense of small business and local communities. It has done that in any number of ways. It has done it through free trade. It certainly is not going to be the corner store that will be involved in massive deals with New York, Denver or Chicago, or whatever. It is big business that does that, not small business. It stacks the deck in favour of big business.

The deregulation we have seen in many sectors has allowed the big companies to take over sectors where small business used to operate and compete and now are not able to any more.

As well, it affects areas that are essential to small business such as air travel and transportation to remote communities. In fact, what has happened is that all we see now are services to the larger communities. Services to the smaller communities where small businesses are located are disappearing.

The government has chosen to stay on a course of persistently high interest rates that penalize small businesses which have to go outside the family or the community for its money. Big business can raise money internally. It can raise money on the capital markets. The whole system of high interest rates has militated against

small businesses, even though they are the ones that keep this country in business.

As well, the tax policies have created a situation where wealth is sucked out of the hinterlands, the small towns, small businesses and the entrepreneurial families. It is concentrated in big cities and big financial institutions, again making it more difficult for small businesses to compete.

The other reason small business sees the government's commitment to them as being a joke is that, more than any other sector, they depend on their customers having money to spend. Without customers who have money to spend and vibrant local communities, small business cannot operate.

I would like to point out what is happening in my own province of Saskatchewan. Finally the central Canadian media are starting to recognize Saskatchewan as being an economic disaster area. In 1988, there were 461 insolvencies, 2,063 businesses disappeared, and only 2,664 businesses were created in that province. That is a net loss of 900 businesses in a small province with only one million in population in just one year.

We see the same trend in my own community of Prince Albert, the major centre in my constituency. In 1987, there was a net gain of 31 new businesses. In 1988, there was a smaller net gain of 18 new businesses. In 1989, there was a drop in the number of businesses in that community of 18. With the way the trends are going, that pattern of businesses disappearing can do nothing but accelerate.

It is no accident that this has happened to the province of Saskatchewan. In the farming community in 1984, when this government took office, there were 67,000 farms in Saskatchewan. Projections are that when the government's term runs out in 1992 there will only be 54,000 farms left, a drop of 13,000 farms in the province of Saskatchewan. That is 13,000 farm families who are not buying their groceries and machinery, who are not getting their hair cuts and so on, in the small communities of Saskatchewan.

Since the government was elected in 1984, 64,000 people have been forced to leave the province of Saskatchewan. People want to stay but economically they are not able to under the government's economic policies. Just in the last year 23,000 people left the province. We used to consider ourselves a have province. In fact, there was a time during the former NDP government we