

on small businessmen is concerned to ensure that this loan program is working. He made a simply incredible reply to the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain). The hon. member made the point that there is a very real danger of banks refusing to recommend loans under this program to small businessmen, farmers or fishermen who might become borrowers from the bank at higher rates of interest. The minister was full of indignation, but not full of help: he suggested that the obvious recourse for people so affected would be to tell their member of parliament. The minister is nodding his head in agreement. That is the extent of his policy. That is the extent of his commitment to ensure that this program is not abused by bankers across the country. In light of that answer, it is well to ask ourselves what other legislation is monitored so weakly in Canada that ministers wait for complaints to come from individual members of parliament to see if the program is working. Not very many.

Most members of parliament do what they can to keep in touch with their constituents, particularly those who might have problems with government agencies. Even the hardest working private member of parliament would have a very slight chance of learning of every instance of businessmen encountering this kind of treatment from their banks. For one thing, some businessmen just will not go to their member of parliament, regardless of his party, with information about their private dealings with their banks. This is a very serious weakness in the program that was drawn to the attention of the minister by the hon. member for Carleton-Charlotte. The minister did not give a serious reply. I hope he will reconsider simply relying on the chance that members of parliament will have these matters brought to their attention so they can transmit them to the minister for some kind of corrective action.

One reason I am particularly concerned about the bill before us is that legislation to effect the capacity of farmers, fishermen and small businessmen to obtain loans has special force on a number of Canadians who reside outside our cities. Of course, there are a number of small business operators, men and women, who make their contribution to the growth of the Canadian economy within the cities of Canada. However, it is obvious that this type of provision for loans to farmers and fishermen principally affects the economic vitality of the smaller communities of Canada. Perhaps it needs restating that when assistance is given to a farmer or fisherman to help mount an effective operation, that assistance in effect helps to generate economic activity in the whole of the region where the individual lives.

While there are small business operations aplenty in the cities of Canada, the fact remains that small business is the only business which comes to our smaller communities. This is in part because of an outdated attitude toward the location of industry, an attitude which is equally at fault whether held by members of the government or senior officials of the public service or when held by large companies.

● (1640)

It is a fact of life that when large or medium sized concerns are considering location options, they settle time after time for the large cities. By and large, it is only small businesses which go to the rural areas. Therefore, legisla-

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tion of the kind before us is particularly important to Canadians who live outside the major cities. I have spoken in this House on other occasions about my feeling that government legislation is weighted, inadvertently perhaps, against the rural areas—that by placing artificial obstacles in the path it decreases the capacity of those areas to grow.

This government, in particular, appears to believe devoutly in the future which its statistics project, that is, a future in which by far the majority of Canadians will be living in a few of our largest urban centres. The fact that the government believes its own statistics means that unconsciously it follows policies in line with such a prediction. I believe such a future is not inevitable for us, but as long as the government accepts this projection as inevitable rural Canada is in danger. Unconscious discrimination against rural Canada has been evident in a number of the measures brought forward since I first came to this House. For example, the new housing legislation was designed to help larger areas; it did not help smaller areas very much.

The sympathies of the government are evident from the attitude taken toward rail abandonment. They are evident also, in the determination shown by ministers to locate penal and other institutions only in the large centres and to ignore the possibility of extending institutional support facilities to some of the smaller places in Canada. They are evident in such small things as failure to inform rural communities of deadlines and guidelines governing LIP applications, assuming that people who live in these communities can learn about such things by reading the metropolitan newspapers or listening to news broadcasts by metropolitan stations. I do not suggest there is any kind of conspiracy against smaller communities. As I say, it derives from the assumption that the future lies inevitably with the metropolitan areas, while failing to acknowledge any capacity to develop a Canadian identity along different lines by encouraging men and women to start business operations in parts of Canada outside the major centres.

We see evidence of the same approach in the legislation before us. It would be impossible to argue that any particular clause in Bill C-14 is directly prejudicial to rural Canada. Nevertheless, the measure fails to recognize that rural areas rely to a far greater extent than urban areas upon small business enterprises. It fails to recognize that time and time again, in the circumstances of today, small business is the only business which locates in these smaller places, giving them an opportunity to contribute to a balanced Canadian identity and a balanced economy.

The concern which should be foremost in the minister's mind during the few weeks in which he is able to hang on to office should be to devise a system which would encourage people to establish businesses in small communities and invest in small enterprises which, at this point, are the only enterprises ready to set themselves up outside the major cities.

Mr. Randolph Harding (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I intend to take part only briefly in the proceedings on third reading of Bill C-14. It is not my intention to cover all the points which previous speakers have raised. One of the principal changes in the legislation we are considering