

*Bank Act*

these banks gave pause to the Inspector General of Banks and to the minister of finance of the day. But what I want, particularly, is not to reflect on the Inspector General of Banks. He is bound by his position as a senior bureaucrat. Under this government senior bureaucrats seem to be bound to give as little information as possible, even to their own ministers. Members of this House who are parliamentary secretaries know that they get precious little information either. The administration in many departments is a closed book, and no legislation is coming forward on the basis of freedom of information to open this up. Hon. members know how frustrated they become because they cannot get information, particularly if they are on the government side. It is not that they would profit personally by the information but that such information would make better members of them—it would make them more intelligent in their dealings with legislation and give them greater knowledge in handling other problems. Many times when I have sat on the finance committee I have felt like one who was playing blind man's buff. The information was all on one side and it was not even disclosed to the government members. How can we discharge our obligations to discuss legislation as elected representatives of the people when the government will not trust members of this House with the necessary information? I have had 23 years of almost unbelievable frustration because of this situation. What kind of job was I to do? Was I to be like the proverbial first-time patron at the racetrack, the woman who claims she picks a horse by sticking a pin in the program. That is about the way it is done here.

**Miss Bégin:** Could a man not have done that?

**Mr. Lambert:** Mr. Speaker, I will correct myself. But the caricature usually relates to a woman going to the racetrack for the first time. She is outnumbered four times to one. Perhaps men do it, too, but I would not be so touchy. But then, they are usually luckier.

I am sure members on both sides, cabinet ministers of today and yesteryear included, will realize how little one knows about a subject when one is brought to decide upon it. What government members admit, and what cabinet ministers will tell you, is that party discipline is there. They feel that because they are the government the Lord has anointed them for the next four or five years, that they have all knowledge and that they can do no wrong. We know that is not so.

What I am asking of those members who sat through all the committee hearings this summer on the Bank Act and of other members who sat in 1978-79 during the public hearings and who worked on the committee report, those who saw a great number of changes, is that they read my amendment very carefully. Subsection (1) imposes a degree of silence; the Inspector shall not disclose to any other person except the minister, the deputy minister of finance, the governor of the Bank of Canada, a representative of the deputy minister of finance or of the governor of the Bank of Canada, if authorized in writing, or directors of the Canada Deposit Insurance Corporation, any information regarding the business or affairs

of a bank or its customers. Similarly, confidentiality is imposed with respect to information:

- (b) received in the course of an international exchange of information contemplated by paragraph (2)(b); or
- (c) furnished to the Inspector pursuant to subsection 303(7)

These are particular returns which are given to the Inspector General of Banks and I say in my amendment that notwithstanding this the inspector shall disclose on a confidential basis, to any standing or special committee of Parliament. That imposes a responsibility upon the members of any standing or special committee of Parliament charged with the examination of the business of banking—and I use that phrase because I think I know what it means, having tried to put it in the act. This is another reason why hon. members should vote for my amendment later tonight or tomorrow. My amendment says:

—the Bank Act, or any statutes of Parliament relating thereto, information

- (a) regarding the business or affairs of any bank carrying on business in Canada

I do not say "of its customers". Notice that.

Over in section 251(1)(a) the information that is to be kept secret is information concerning the business or affairs of a bank I do not think members need to know anything about the affairs of the customers, so it is deliberately left out of my amendment. But a different position is rather if it is regarding the business affairs of any bank or is:

- (b) received in the course of an international exchange of information such as is referred to in paragraph (2)(b)
- (c) furnished to the Inspector pursuant to subsection 303(7)
- (d) of a general nature pertaining to the business of banking

These are position papers within the Department of Finance or which the Inspector General of Banks may have, provided such information is requested of the inspector in a formal resolution adopted by such a committee. This is not merely somebody teeing off and saying, "Oh, I would like to know something about what happened to that particular bank". It is in keeping with the degree of knowledge of which members of a banking committee should be apprised.

● (2110)

**Mr. Blenkarn:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Lambert:** I am not being partisan. I am relying upon, shall I say, my experience in this committee. I think it would be a much better committee if in the ten-year period, say three or four years down the road, we could, for instance, seek information regarding the business of leasing automobiles and ask such questions as, "Where was it concentrated? What had been the trend as the result of the amendments we put; what had been the trends with regard to banking operations in data processing?"

Outside the revision to the Bank Act, there is no opportunity to summon the president of the Canadian Bankers' Association. The committees are very limited. One day there may be more congressional power in the committees, and I hope so. I also hope that the committee members will be fewer in num-