

Small Businesses Loans Act

individual sets up business for the first time and receives a flood of forms to be filled out weekly, monthly or quarterly, it is too much for him. For the small operator it is too much, particularly in the incipient stages of an enterprise.

● (1500)

I would like to see the budget include financial incentives for small businesses to maintain and to revitalize Canada's small communities. It is important that Government initiatives encourage the maintenance of small community businesses and work against the trend we see of moving people, facilities and businesses into larger metropolitan centres. It should take steps to encourage the small-business sector we find in Canada's small villages and towns to stay in place and remain as vital organs of their communities.

I would like to see the Minister of State for Small Businesses and Tourism (Mr. Rompkey) bring forward a Bill soon which would recognize the fact that Canada's small business is a federal tax-collecting agency. The federal Government should find ways and means of compensating small businesses for their collection of federal sales tax from which the federal Government benefits exclusively.

Most Provinces recognize that small businesses provide a tax collection service, and the federal Government should now follow suit. I believe that many steps could be taken which would provide incentives, encouragement and support for the small-business sector. A simplification of the existing tax laws as they apply to the small-business sector would be a step in that direction. As I indicated, the removal of the red tape required of small businesses would be another step in that direction. But, most important, one gets the impression that the small-business sector of our economy is not a priority with the Government.

I am not necessarily saying that it is not, but the perception in the land is that the Government is quite prepared to invest hundreds of millions—nay, many billions—of dollars to assist large corporations. When it comes time to expend money to provide assistance even to small businesses in dire straits, to money is slow in coming. Therefore, one gets the impression that the federal Government is not particularly interested in supporting small business.

While small businesses today have little to cheer about, they should and could have a great deal to cheer about. When we consider the natural resources which abound in virtually every region of Canada in one form or another, when we consider that Canada as a nation has more energy alternatives than probably any other country in the entire world, when we consider that we are a well educated, well trained population in terms of having a populace which is able to take advantage of the newest and most exciting technologies available, and when we consider that we have capital in this country—and I want to emphasize that point—to support new business ventures that in fact would result in a full employment option for Canada becoming a reality, we realize that all we lack is the will. When we add together the natural, human and capital resources, we realize that we lack leadership and the will to

succeed. Perhaps this is a small step today. By seeing the Small Businesses Loans Act extended for small businesses in Canada for another period of time and with the pending budget, let us hope and pray that the federal Government will see this as the beginning of the process of supporting, nurturing and encouraging the most vital sector of our economy, the small-business sector.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak on Bill C-144, to extend the Small Businesses Loans Act which is part of the heritage of the Diefenbaker administration. Also it is a pleasure to see the marvellous conversion on the part of the New Democratic Party to the small-business community.

I listened with great interest to the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis). I believe he meant every word he said with respect to small business. It is a tragedy that he cannot bring Members of his Party along with him into that policy. On the one hand they want to see small business succeed. In fact they want it to succeed so well that it stays small, because if it ever grows, they want to nationalize it and punish success. It is a mystery to me how the Hon. Member could say in one of his closing sentences that the country lacks a will to succeed. Then when the business succeeds they want to punish it, as I heard this morning during Question Period—punishing profit, which is one of the dirty words in the lexicon of the New Democratic Party. If we look over their policies from their annual conventions, we find that they have such a profound commitment to no growth, whether it is energy, profit or whatever aspect of the economy, that their entire policy is really the cruise missile of the Canadian economy; they will search out and destroy whatever they can if it gets anywhere. The question they have never answered is: If a small business does what they want it to do—succeeds, makes a profit, grows and multiplies—at what point does it become a wicked, wicked enterprise?

Mr. Riis: Do you not have anything positive to say? At least we have something positive to say. All we hear from you is doom and gloom, whine and snivel.

Mr. Friesen: That is a question they will not answer. I know the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap wants to interrupt. He is entitled to do that because he has to speak on behalf of his entire caucus, but very few of his caucus share his point of view with respect to small business. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) rightly observed this morning, the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap is wearing blue and grey today. That is appropriate.

The Bill we are debating now, while it was introduced originally by the Diefenbaker Government, has changed in its purpose. Originally it was geared to helping small business expand and prosper. Now I think it is necessary to rescue small business. That is a tragedy. I recognize that part of this is because of the general economic malaise around the world and that, therefore, small business has a peculiar problem and cannot compete as well as large corporations.