

Bills of Exchange Act

credit to these hon. members for their interest in the consumer market before the government showed any interest.

But, Mr. Speaker, this brings up the whole subject of private members' bills and their future in Parliament. I believe it is about time, in setting up its rules, the House of Commons took a long hard look at the matter of private members' bills and the rules that govern them as well as the frustration of a private member, such as the then member for Essex South, who, in compliance with a promise to his electorate, introduced a private member's bill to do the very thing the minister is now doing. He found, however, his enthusiasm was dampened by the whip who mustered up all the government backbenchers he could get to talk out that particular bill. That is a deplorable practice, Mr. Speaker, which has evolved in this House and is one which I think should be changed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: If the bill of the hon. member for Essex South, the bill of the hon. member for Timiskaming or the bill of the hon. member for Spadina had been accepted, we would have had this legislation on the books at least six years ago. So, as I say, we should end the practice of talking out private members' bills. I say we should do this because I think it is a practice which is not in keeping with present-day Parliament and what the people of Canada expect from their Members of Parliament. The government may expect us to merely rubber stamp everything it chooses to bring in, but governments are not infallible. This government certainly is not infallible. This government probably will find that its most serious error in judgment is its failure to recognize the rights of Members of Parliament to contribute to the laws of this country by bringing in private members' bills.

Mr. Gibson: It is getting better.

Mr. McGrath: The hon. member who interjects from his seat is probably one of the members who has been thoroughly hurt by this practice and probably, as a consequence of being hurt, has become a little cynical. This is a great pity, because I know the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth (Mr. Gibson) came here with good intentions and full of enthusiasm. Certainly, he did not expect his own party to sabotage all his efforts to make a contribution in this House and to the laws of the country.

[Mr. McGrath.]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: This is also a great pity because I am sure if the government would allow the hon. member for Hamilton-Wentworth to do so he would probably make quite a considerable contribution; but with this government he will never have that opportunity.

• (12:50 p.m.)

The minister referred to the report of the committee of which he was co-chairman, the committee on consumer credit. This should be his Bible. Perhaps when it is convenient he quotes from it, as he has done today. But on other occasions I am sure that this document must come back to haunt him. However, in using the recommendations of this committee as his terms of reference for introducing this amendment, the minister forgets to tell us why it took three years to carry out this unanimous recommendation of the committee.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister did not get the mantle immediately upon the establishment of this department, although he thought he would. He had to wait on the bleachers for a while. On looking through the records I find that during the course of the discussion of the legislation setting up the Department the minister's predecessor, who now holds the portfolio of Minister of Justice, said that the government already had many pieces of legislation in the hopper, waiting to present to parliament, and all in the area of consumer protection. Mr. Speaker, we have not seen them.

First of all, the then minister had to take some considerable time setting up the department under the new act. But notwithstanding the fact that he then referred to the presence of galling injustices against consumers, injustices so prevalent across the nation that they required immediate attention, it has taken all this time to bring in these amendments.

Mr. Pepin: Now, now.

Mr. McGrath: The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) could more usefully consume his time by going out and selling some of our surplus wheat.

Mr. Pepin: Then, you would accuse me of not being present in the House.

Mr. McGrath: If the minister has the wheat situation in hand he could take a look at the Grand Banks of Newfoundland where there are loads of fish waiting to be sold.