

Third, the committee proposes a very strong legal notification change with respect to the changes in service charges under Section 201 of the Bank Act.

The committee also proposed certain draft regulations. The committee Members on the government side have been working very closely with Cabinet to effect the changes and proposals set out by the committee.

It has been interesting over the last number of weeks, particularly with respect to the nature of change that is taking place, to see that people had no idea in many cases just how arrogant were bank presidents and how their lack of understanding of the ordinary person existed.

Sir, I want to read into the record a letter that was written by J. A. G. Bell, President of the Bank of Nova Scotia. This is a letter in reply to a lady by the name of Sandra Hanmer of 120 Golfview Avenue in Toronto. Mrs. Hanmer was after the Bank of Nova Scotia concerning the appearance of a branch at Gerrard and Woodbine. I will just read a couple of paragraphs of Mr. Bell's letter. It reads: "We have had the future of that branch under consideration for some time, and expect to make a decision in the very near future on whether or not it should remain open. Quite frankly, the branch is not a profitable operation since the customer base consists largely of senior citizens who receive their banking services free of charge. It is also worth noting that our client base includes a large number of welfare recipients who now use our low cost banking services. These services were referred to by the House of Commons Finance Committee as life-line banking."

Needless to say, Mrs. Hanmer was shocked. I want to read a couple of lines from her reply to Mr. Bell. "I write you because the facade of one of your branches is falling off into the street, potentially endangering people's lives, and you tell me that the branch is not a profitable operation because it is only welfare people and senior citizens who use it and therefore it is quite okay for you to let it fall into disrepair and endanger passers-by. Is this the type of defence you would present in court had someone been injured and sued you?"

Clearly, as members of the Finance Committee we would have preferred to work out a voluntary arrangement concerning changes in bank service charges and bank practice. However, clearly, the kind of arrogance and lack of sensitivity expressed by the President of the Bank of Nova Scotia in his letter and other letters as a result of other actions, leave the Government with very little alternative except to proceed with the legislative hammer and regulatory control. It is important that that regulatory hammer and control be effected properly.

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While the committee has drafted a Private Member's Bill, and that Private Member's Bill will remain on the books and be debated within a week if something is not done pretty quickly, it is important that the Government move ahead, because it is the Government that controls the machinery of enforcement, and the machinery of regulation. Therefore, it is

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important that we give the Government the benefit of the doubt and the support it needs in order to bring forward that legislation and regulation that has been promised by the Minister, which I am advised will be at least as tough, if not tougher and more demanding than the position of the committee. Indeed, I suspect that, had the committee report been before the committee today, it would have been harsher than it is.

I am sure most Members would have thought that a committee report that was doing things that were largely agreeable, or that should be agreeable to anybody with any sensitivity in Government or in banking, would have been accepted as fair and decent. We were charged with being schizophrenic. One becomes very schizophrenic over the type of approach by bank presidents that were given to Mrs. Hanmer, Mrs. de Gruchy, and others who have had their accounts dipped into and dinged as we have seen, not only in the period leading up to the preparation of the report, but since the report itself.

Ordinary Canadians look to Government in cases where there is oligopolistic activity for regulation to protect them. We believe, if at all possible, that business ought to be able to regulate itself and ensure that that regulation is in the public interest. Clearly the banking industry, with respect to service charges, has not been able to come to grips with the reality of what it is doing, and it will have to be pushed. The only agency that can push it is the Government, and the Government has agreed to do that.

This motion is improper at this time. It does not help the cause of moving change forward. It is designed by the New Democratic Party to create problems in the process by which we address the problem of service charges in a manner that makes handling those problems work. It is our preference to have a government Bill. It is our preference to have the Government move ahead. We have been working to do that. To move concurrence at this point in this fashion is wrong and not productive.

This Party will be voting against the motion for the simple reason that this motion is brought forward to create a political arm for the New Democratic Party that did not care about service charges until we handled the matter, and now it is trying to recoup and get aboard what it thinks may be a bandwagon. They are johnny-come-lately. They are lately, lately, lately.

Mr. Rodriguez: Surely, Robert MacIntosh was correct and it is a lot of bombast, a lot of yelling, condemning, and personal attacks on the New Democratic Party to attempt to project the image that somehow or other the Hon. Member is the father of bank service charge changes in the interest of consumers.

I wish to point out that the New Democratic Party was asking questions on this issue back in November, 1987. The standing committee commenced hearings on April 28. As the