

Bills of Exchange Act

I attach prime importance to it, more so than any other department of government. But when we see headlines dealing with amendments to bills of exchange acts to "aid the victimized consumer", and "Basford steps up war on false ads", and so on, then in view of the wide scope of the minister's department I can only describe this sort of thing as nit-picking.

From what I have seen of the operations of this department so far, the real abuses against the consumer have not yet been recognized, and I do not know the reason for this.

Mr. Basford: The provinces have the jurisdiction.

Mr. Peddle: I am not making a political speech. I realize there are a heck of a lot more consumers than there are dealers and finance companies. Perhaps this is why this legislation might be of great appeal to consumers. But let us stop for a moment and wonder whether we are not being a little irresponsible so far as the minorities in this question are concerned.

Finance companies in this country are generally regarded as responsible business corporations. I think the big majority of dealers are regarded as responsible people. If, in making laws to cope with the occasional fly-by-night operator we are going to make every finance company that takes non-recourse paper become a service station, then I do not think we are being responsible. The business of a finance company is money, the same as the business of a car dealer is selling cars. If all the responsible finance companies in the country have to devote their office time to dealing with service problems, then I say it is a case of the tail wagging the horse and I do not agree with it.

I agree with the principle of this bill. I agree that the consumer needs protection against unscrupulous sellers. But for God's sake, let us put the onus where it belongs and tighten up the law regarding people who get licences to sell instead of turning the office of every finance company in the country into a service station. Perhaps we can provide better guarantees. Perhaps the law should provide that a merchant who sells a refrigerator should issue a more legally drawn guarantee. Let the buyer go to the dealer and, by taking legal action if necessary, work out his problem with him. But let us not inflict this sort of law on people in the money business, any

more than we inflict the money business on people in the appliance business. Let us be fair about this.

I do not think the minister is naïve enough to think that he can legislate the old warning "*caveat emptor*" out of existence. If so, he has another think coming. Since human beings being what they are, *caveat emptor* will always be a very important warning for people to observe.

This is my only point, Mr. Speaker. I think this bill should be studied, and studied very carefully. As I say, I am not the champion of the finance companies. If I had been around on the day they were given legal licence to operate, I would probably have refused them the breath of life. But since they are legally in existence, let us not, for political purposes or otherwise, use them as a whipping boy.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see this bill before us today and should like to make some brief comments on it.

It is not often one gets a chance to toot one's own horn, but I introduced a similar proposal in 1963 in response to an individual series of problems that had arisen in my own riding. Somebody said that northern Ontario is a very gullible market, that the people there can be sold almost anything. They are very trusting people and not used to shysters who come in from southern Ontario and take advantage of their trusting nature. I presume the same is true in Newfoundland and in other parts of the country.

My colleague from Toronto says, "Who are they?"

Mr. Lewis: I must correct the hon. member; he misheard me. I merely said I would get out of his way.

Mr. Peters: What prompted my interest in this matter in northern Ontario, though not in a financial way, was the knitting machine operation. There was nothing much wrong with the knitting machines, but it was a little like going to a circus where you see a man or a woman with a very small knife making all kinds of fancy doo-dads out of radishes, carrots and so on. This little device sells for about 25 cents, and the first thing that happens when your wife gets it home is that she cuts her finger. The knitting machines were somewhat in that class, but they carried another problem. The company selling the knitting machines said that it would also sell