

Bank Act

Obviously there is no provision for the Inspector General of Banks to inquire into any hanky panky by any of the banks.

The Office has virtually no power to direct a bank to behave in a particular way in its relations with a client.

It does not matter how small or how large the client, there is no provision whatsoever for the Inspector General of Banks to intrude into the affairs of that bank. I expect it would probably lead to chaos within the banking system if one of us or the man on the street could put his oar into the banking system without just cause. However, if we are going to appoint someone and provide him with the title of Inspector General of Banks, we should give him some teeth with which to act.

The Inspector General went on to say:

Nonetheless, where a dissatisfied client of a bank writes to this office or his complaint is brought to the attention of this office, the complaint is often referred to a senior officer of the bank involved to ensure that it receives a fair hearing in the bank.

Isn't that just sweet! If a particular bank has done a gross disservice to a client, the matter is reported to the Inspector General of Banks. The Inspector General writes to the manager of that bank, states that there is a problem and tells him to look after it. There is no slap on the wrist, no investigation. The bank is supposed to examine itself and make sure it did right by its client.

We see in the press today evidence and indications that some banks have cheated the public and have acted in an irresponsible fashion. It is grossly unfair to tar the banking system with a broad brush, but Canadians know that there are those within the banking system, indeed within any system, who are unscrupulous in the manner in which they do business with the public.

The Inspector General went on to say:

More difficult problems involving large clients in contractual obligations are normally settled in direct negotiations between the client and the bank or finally in the courts.

That brings me to the next point. I draw the attention of this House to the conduct of one bank. I do this with some discomfort because I am one of their satisfied customers. I refer to the Bank of Montreal and the manner in which that bank in British Columbia treated a constituent of mine, Merlin Thompson, who attempted to establish an industry within my constituency, Arvee Cedar Mills Limited. That matter is before the courts. The manner in which the Bank of Montreal treated that individual is indeed scandalous. After this has dragged through the courts for the next couple of years I hope the record will show that the Bank of Montreal does not act in this fashion in all of its branches.

Clearly my experience has been favourable, but just as clearly we should watch the bank for the next little while because this sad, nasty story of the actions of the Bank of Montreal will clearly be told. That is not the only case. Recently in this House the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen) asked the Minister of Justice (Mr. Basford) a question with regard to the conduct of a bank in Vancouver with reference to the manner in which it treated one of his constituents in violation of the law.

[Mr. Brisco.]

Not too long ago the British Columbia provincial minister of consumer and corporate affairs publicly stated over television that his department is very concerned about the attitude of banks. While there is growing public concern over the manner in which banks are doing business, this government is dragging its feet as usual. It does not matter whether it is a depressed Canadian dollar, massive unemployment or gross inflation, this government fails to respond. It is two years behind in taking action.

We have seen the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) wrestle inflation to the ground. His biceps really do not amount to much. He is not fit for wrestling or for a lot of other things, particularly serving as Prime Minister of this country.

Not too long ago there was another disastrous bill before the committee, the borrowers and depositors protection act. It was brought in on the advice of the officials and with the blessings of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet). If ever a bill contained excess verbiage and ill-defined rhetoric, that was a classic. It died at the committee stage. The minister was clearly incompetent to move it any further.

In that bill there was provision for those who have had their cause advanced in this House today, those on low income and those with no income save and except welfare or the popular route of unemployment insurance. Because of the difficulty in borrowing from a bank, these people go to the loan sharks. We had representations from senior members of the Montreal police force about this problem.

May I call it five o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier)—Official Languages—Protection of linguistic rights of minorities—Government position; the hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie)—Power—Newfoundland—Federal assistance in power projects; the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Johnston)—Unemployment Insurance—Canadian railroad workers employed by United States railroads—Entitlement to benefits.