

loan rates of about 15 per cent on an annual basis, such companies would get a fair return for giving money to people a month or two before they would normally receive their rebates. As I pointed out, the average return is back in four weeks and 15 per cent is charged, which would work out to 180 per cent annually. If the return takes two months, the effective rate of interest is 90 per cent.

● (1815)

If the Government is not prepared to amend the legislation, I would urge it to meet with the banks and the credit unions to persuade them to extend discount options to their customers at the rate of consumer loans. That would at least reduce the social cost of the discount to poor families.

The banks have been given the ability to become the most profitable organizations and the largest corporations in the country. Surely we can ask them to show some social responsibility. Surely we can ask them to show some consideration for these people who are among the poorest in the country. Surely we can ask them to co-operate in getting rid of this blight which is being forced upon them.

Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has asked two questions. He is concerned about the tax rebate discounting process which is now being followed, as well as with cheques which are being cashed for a fee.

With respect to the tax rebate discounting question, I wish to assure the Hon. Member that the entire issue is being studied very carefully by this Government. By way of background, I wish to remind the House of the purpose of the Tax Rebate Discounting Act. It is to protect the interests of taxpayers who give up the rights to their anticipated tax refunds, in exchange for a minimum of 85 per cent of the value of the refunds, in order to receive immediate cash. The statute was enacted in 1978 at the urging of provincial Governments.

The legislation appears to have addressed successfully the problems it was intended to remedy. Consider the situation of those who, as the Hon. Member puts it, simply cannot wait to receive the money in the usual fashion. These people may have very urgent and pressing financial needs and may be unable to obtain credit in the traditional ways. No longer is it necessary for them to seek out loan sharks or to lose as much as 50 per cent of their tax refunds. Now they can obtain at least 85 per cent of their refunds in advance in an atmosphere which is legitimate and business-like.

Nevertheless, this Government recognizes that, as with any new piece of legislation, particularly when it relates to a growing industry, certain new factors may be encountered. That is why we must continually, as the Hon. Member has mentioned, monitor these processes which from time to time may get slightly out of hand. However, we have no reason to suspect that they are out of hand. Indeed, representatives from discounters and such concerned groups as the National Anti-Poverty Organization have already been studying it. We are in

close contact with them in order to try to avoid any possible rip-offs which might be occurring in the industry.

With respect to the Hon. Member's question on cheque-cashing operations, I wish to advise the House that this matter is also under consideration.

The Hon. Member has suggested that legislation should be passed to outlaw these businesses. Indeed, the recent development of this type of business, which now has at least 20 offices operating across Canada, could give rise to concern. Such concern, however, need not lead directly to the conclusion that cheque-cashing services should be outlawed. The rapid growth of cheque-cashing services indicates that some Canadians are prepared to pay up to 10 per cent of the value of a cheque merely to have it cashed. Their reasons for doing so may derive from such legitimate interests as greater convenience.

Although the Department has received no complaints from the users of cheque-cashing services, the House can be assured that we will continue to monitor the development of the cheque-cashing business.

In closing I wish to thank the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North for the opportunity to address his concerns.

● (1820)

FORESTRY—JACKPINE BUDWORM INFESTATION. (B) REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO USE INSECTICIDE

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I raised a question with the Acting Minister of Forestry a few days ago in the House concerning the jackpine budworm infestation which has swept across Ontario this past year. Actually, in 1983 there were some 67,000 hectares of jackpine infected. By this year, 1984, there is over 1.5 million hectares infected. Of this amount, 1.5 million acres are in northeastern Ontario. In the Eddy forest products limits north of Espanola and up towards Timmins, some 150,000 acres to 200,000 acres, which have high concentrations of jackpine, are highly infected. In total, some 800,000 acres are infected.

I asked the Acting Minister if he would make representations to the Ontario Government to put in place a control program for 1985 so that the decision could be made now. In that way the control program can take place in late June of 1985. I also asked the Acting Minister if he would make representations to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) to have the biological insecticide, *Bacillus Thuringiensis*, approved on an emergency or operational basis for use during the 1985 year.

We must appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that the economic viability of whole communities such as the town of Espanola are at stake here. We are talking about thousands of jobs both in the plant and in the bush. I appreciate that the Ontario Government has not been too active with regard to this kind of control program. I am told that in this past year only 3,000 hectares were actually under a control program for the spruce budworm, which is a similar type of infestation, whereas in Nova Scotia some 21,000 hectares are under control. Quebec has some 600,000 hectares under control and New Brunswick has