

The co-operative movement's answer to this is that the ownership of productive assets should be in the hands of the users. This will result in a diffusion of earnings among the people and the democratic nature of the organization will put the power in the hands of members. In this case it might be said that what is good for the organization is good for the country. If it wasn't, the people have the method and the right to change the situation.

Further on he says the following about participation:

Each of us must answer for himself an important question: "Am I satisfied to let others plan for my welfare—deciding what is good for me, how much money I should make and how I should live. Or do I wish to participate in and thereby influencing the whole range of activities that have a bearing on my well-being?" In political terms a benevolent dictator decides all of these things for the citizens and by definition in their best interests. In our society we reject "out of hand" the idea of turning so much power over to one or a few individuals. We prefer to deal with the political situation democratically. We haven't been as careful about our position in the business world. Here we are allowing tremendous power to pass into a few hands and not necessarily into the hands that might be described as benevolent. Most of their decisions are based on how to get more out of the public rather than how to help meet the needs of people. Are we to be spectators in our world—at best, orchids that depend upon the gardener for protection and pampering or at worst objects to be exploited and hoodwinked by those who have their own selfish interests at heart?

The co-operative structure provides the method by which people can participate in the economic decisions which have an important bearing on social conditions and personal well-being.

There is one more short paragraph that I would like to quote. It reads as follows:

The reasons for supporting co-operatives and encouraging others to understand and participate are complex and at the same time quite simple. In political terms our total society subscribes to the principle of democratic action. We are simply saying that the same principle is valid in economic activities which in turn has a direct bearing on our social system. We wish to have power of all types controlled democratically. The democratic system demands participation and responsibility. If we are not prepared to accept responsibility, the system is not the right one for us. If we do accept the responsibility, the economic and social opportunities are unlimited and the opportunities for personal development will unfold like the pages of a book as we go about the task of meeting human needs as brothers rather than as competitors.

• (8:10 p.m.)

This is something of the philosophy underlying the co-operative movement, and this bill is designed to further it. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the co-operative movement feels that this bill represents a good starting basis for federal legislation. In Great Britain special co-operative legislation was introduced a long time ago, in fact as far back as 1852, but at the outset it simply gave co-ops a legal status on which to exist and there was a long struggle before the distinctive characteristics of co-operatives were recognized in law. It will probably take a long time before this legislation in Canada is made to fit exactly the needs of the co-operative movement.

People connected with the co-operative movement are worried about several points in the bill. This afternoon the minister stated that under this legislation, as a rule no member of a co-operative shall have more than one

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vote. But the interpretation given in clause 3(1)(d)(i) is as follows:

—except in the case of an association the charter by-laws of which otherwise provide, each member or delegate has only one vote—

In other words, a large exception is written right into the legislation. A few years ago the Co-operative Union of Canada laid down the principles which it stated were important for incorporation into any forthcoming federal legislation. They said quite clearly that the principle of one member, one vote should apply and that the legislation should provide for a system of delegate voting with all the usual provisions required by co-operatives. This is a cornerstone of the co-operative movement. I contend that the co-operative movement is justly worried about this legislation, which breaches the principle of one member, one vote by providing:

—except in the case of an association the charter by-laws of which otherwise provide, each member or delegate has only one vote—

This definition will require a great deal of explanation in committee. The matter of proxy voting is also worrisome to the co-operative movement. Again today the minister explained that no member as a rule shall vote by proxy, but in the interpretation section of the legislation we find the following provision:

no member may vote by proxy except that a member of an association may vote by proxy for the election of directors if the charter by-laws of the association so provide—

The Co-operative Union of Canada recommended that voting by proxy should be prohibited. This is one of the matters to which attention must be directed when the legislation gets into committee. The co-operative movement is very pleased to see safeguards provided regarding the use of the words "co-op" and "pool" where they form part of the name of a co-operative association. Other features of the legislation fall in line with co-operative thinking. When the legislation goes to committee I hope the committee will hear representations from the co-operative movement on a large scale.

In conclusion, I appeal to the minister to change the referral of the bill so that it may be sent to the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs instead of to the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee. We do not have a consumer affairs committee. Let him do with this bill what he has done in recent times with the subject matter of his other legislation, namely, send it to the health and welfare committee. It is true that that committee has a lot of work to do, but co-ops essentially deal with people; they come under the heading of consumer matters. Sending the bill to the health and welfare committee would save the minister the trouble of taking all the lawyers off the legal committee and putting consumers on it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-177 is certainly extremely detailed and