

*Bank Act*

There are certain charges that we believe should be outlawed. We have specifically named them in my Private Member's Bill which will be brought out shortly in the House. One is this minimum balance charge and the other is the NSF charge-back. The NSF charge-back is not in force for small businesses. It has to be applied to small businesses.

Another proposal we are making to the Minister which seeks to amend the Bill is to provide a financial services ombudsperson. This is not the smoke and mirrors imagery that I created a little while ago but in fact a person who is impartial and outside the banks. There are no mirrors here, no Snow White's stepmother. This is a financial service ombudsperson to whom consumers can go, with whom they can negotiate. The ombudsperson will be a referee and report to Parliament on a regular basis. That is the prince that will come. It is the only way to save Snow White. To surrender Snow White into the hands of these 167 dwarfs across the way is to say that the whole question of regulating bank service charges is hopeless. We do not believe that.

The Government can move in this direction to assure Canadians that in fact when they deal with financial institutions they are being dealt with fairly.

• (1640)

I talked about the privileged position which banks had in this society. I want to refer to Mr. Ritchie's closing comments in his speech because I think we have to be concerned. The Minister should be concerned. Here is what he said:

The truly fundamental question raised by the service charge issue—and here I return to my theme—concerns the proper role of government in regulating behaviour in the market-place. Provided there is adequate disclosure of service charges, there is more than sufficient competition in the financial industry to ensure that the consumer's interest is protected.

Can you believe that? Can you believe that in fact what this bank president is saying is that Governments should stay out of regulating the behaviour of banks. Governments regulate the behaviour of citizens every single day of the year. I cannot do certain things in this House. I cannot take it all off on the street. You cannot drive your car beyond certain speeds in certain areas.

**Mr. MacKay:** Oh, yes, you can.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** You cannot drive your car beyond certain speeds in certain areas. You can, but society regulates that. If you are caught you are charged.

In this particular instance he is saying that banks which hold this privileged position of oligopoly should be allowed to do whatever it is they want to do. Their behaviour should not be circumscribed by the same body that gave them their charter in the first place, that gave them this privileged position. That is what he is saying, and that is something that we cannot accept. To establish certain basic ground rules does not prevent Mr. Ritchie and his other compatriots in the banks from having what passes for competition.

I see you, Mr. Speaker, giving me the two fingers. Does it prevent them from doing that? It does not do that, but I think there is certain minimal behaviour which must be regulated, and I have described those.

We are not able to accept this Bill. We are opposed to it. We see no point in proceeding with it because we are not interested in playing powder puff games. It is smoke and mirrors. It really does not deal with the problem that Canadians are having with banks.

It was not just notification or the whole rigmarole of notifying them in the prescribed fashion. That was not the problem we heard about. That was not the problem at all. The problem was the variance of service charges and the amounts. That is what concerned them, the exotic nature of those service charges and the ever increasing amounts.

In light of that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Port Moody—Coquitlam (Mr. Waddell):

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-9, an Act to amend the Bank Act, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence".

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** The House has heard the terms of the amendment. Continuing debate with the Hon. Member for Markham.

**An Hon. Member:** Will there be comments and questions?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski):** Pursuant to Standing Order 74 the first three speakers had 40 minutes with no questions or comments.

We are now entering into the second phase where we will have 20-minute speeches plus 10 minutes of questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Markham has the floor.