

Routine Proceedings

I ask the minister: What is the government doing to be a partner?

There is an acknowledgement on the front page, thanking the National Consumer Council of the United Kingdom and the United States for all of their good suggestions. This is the source of the information for this booklet.

On page 5 there are ideas to inspire educators which I find very interesting, as will the rest of Canada. It tells educators to conduct taste tests on products such as soft drinks, snack foods, candies and so on. They are to compare name brands with generic no-name bulk foods. In other words, they can do taste tests on junk foods.

I do not know how long the minister has been out of school, but soft drinks and junk food are not part of the educational standards of schools today. Imagine suggesting these as ideas to inspire educators. I am really surprised that this kind of junk is being produced in the name of National Consumer Week.

• (1600)

When will the minister bring in a new Bankruptcy Act? It is an act which has not been changed in 43 years. His ministry has a revised Bankruptcy Act which has been ready for review since February of 1988, according to my sources.

[*Translation*]

I would like to point out to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs that it is the first time, in the history of Canada and the world, that a country has two consumer taxes, one at the provincial level and one at the federal level.

In concluding, Madam Speaker, I wonder what the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs did last week to encourage consumers, when the bank rate went up again.

[*English*]

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Madam Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to make a few comments about consumers in this week, National Consumers Week.

The minister has his own message for consumers. He talks about teaming up the business community, consum-

ers and the government for a more effective marketplace.

I have a message that I would like consumers to think about this week. I want consumers to think about how this government has treated consumers, not just this week but for the last six years.

First, this government through the Governor of the Bank of Canada, John Crow, has followed a high interest rate policy. Think about the effects of a high interest rate policy on consumers—not only the consumers who are working but the ones who are unemployed.

Since the government was re-elected in 1988 it has increased interest rates 20 times. Some 71,000 jobs have disappeared in the manufacturing sector of this country. Some 47,599 consumers and small businesses have declared bankruptcy.

Mr. McDermid: How many new ones have been created?

Mr. Rodriguez: News ones created—created where? They are all working for McDonald's and Harvey's in the service sector. These are low paying jobs, jobs with no guarantee that they will be there tomorrow. We are trading in some good, solid, challenging, interesting and well-paying jobs for a pittance. That is what we are trading them in for.

Second, how has this government treated consumers? I ask Canadians to think about it this week.

It has pursued a privatization and deregulation policy. All of this was to create a more competitive marketplace.

Madam Speaker, let us take a look at the airline industry. I think of my own municipality which wrote to the Minister of Transport since deregulation and the privatization of Air Canada in the Sudbury area. We do not have a proliferation of airlines to provide competition. What we have got are two national airlines where before we had four.

Has the price come down? No, the price has escalated. Imagine paying \$350 return from Sudbury to Toronto—some 240 miles. You can fly to London, England and return for \$350.

Have consumers received any more assurance of safety in the air? Not on your bippy, Madam Speaker.

Mr. McDermid: Not on her what?