

*Bank Act*

the parts of Canada where there will be support, nurturing and development.

Because of that privileged position and because of the extremely important role the banking institutions play in the development of Canada, we in the New Democratic Party feel that there must be steps taken to ensure greater accountability on the part of our banks and to ensure that the banks are operating in the best interests of Canada and Canadians. I do not think the present legislation begins to address that seriously.

Previous speakers from the New Democratic Party have made comments about conflict of interest situations. As politicians we are very sensitive about the concept of conflict of interest. As previous speakers have indicated, we recognize that when there is a conflict of interest which is obvious, the individual involved is not permitted to vote on that particular issue. That is fine. That covers the bases. There is no question about that, but all of us in this House know—we have all been involved in the political process long enough—that one can be extremely influential in decision-making without having to participate directly in the vote. In many, many ways all of us attempt to influence legislation without perhaps even involving ourselves in a very direct way.

As a member of the New Democratic Party I reflect my party's views, and I feel that we need some public participation in the banking business. We see public participation in the banking business in some of the most progressive and dynamic countries in the world in terms of their economies. I am speaking about countries such as West Germany, which is generally held up around the world as a model of a first-class entrepreneurial economy.

We see public participation in banking institutions and so forth in France. We see public participation in banking in the United Kingdom and in the Scandinavian countries. These are not countries in which economic development is hindered or retarded by public participation. Indeed, as I indicated earlier, we are talking here about some of the most progressive and dynamic economies in the western world.

No such accountability exists in Canada. Banking institutions in Canada do not in any way adequately reflect the views of the Canadian public, nor do they satisfy the interests of the Canadian public.

Motion No. 10 is important with respect to eliminating interlocking directorates. Such interlocking directorates include George Weston Limited, Cominco, Dominion Construction, Bell Canada, Inco Limited, Canadian International Paper Company, Kaiser Resources, Mobil Oil, Westinghouse Canada, Shell Canada, and one could go on and on. When one considers and analyses just who these directors are and what they represent, there is one very serious omission. Being progressive now, we see that some of the banks have housewives on their boards. Although this is certainly a token gesture, we can say that it is a small step toward recognizing that half of the Canadian population happens to be women who have very special sets of interests.

However, there is a group which is not represented in the directorships of the banks of Canada.

**An hon. Member:** The NDP.

**Mr. Riis:** It is a small group of people who happen to account for about 42 per cent of the employment in Canada, who happen to represent about 930,000 small businesses across the country, who happen to provide the entrepreneurship which is 100 per cent Canadian and who, according to recent reports, have provided some of the most creative programs. They are developing new technologies for this country. They represent the flavour of our Canadian communities because they are part of our Canadian communities. I ask anyone in the chamber to indicate one board which includes a representative of the small business community. Small business is eliminated, and as the previous speaker indicated, one of the points of having these various individuals on boards of directors is to provide their input because they lend a certain expertise.

● (1620)

Has the small business community nothing to add during decision-making times? Once again this government has shown itself to be extremely insensitive to this crucial sector of our country. I know ministers stand up, particularly at luncheons, and tell the small business community that they are the saviours of the small entrepreneur, that they are the people who support the concept of small business in Canada. The Tories have the guts to stand up at these luncheons and make the same kind of comment, that they are the party which supports the small entrepreneur in Canada. I say to them: show me the legislation to prove that. I suggest that if you were to look at the legislation—no matter whether it is legislation of the Tory government or of the Liberal government—you would find that at present there exist 200 programs to assist business in Canada which are sponsored by the federal government. But I would ask people to reflect on how many of those programs are available to the small businessman. Out of the 200 programs, only two are designed specifically for the small entrepreneur.

**An hon. Member:** Shame!

**Mr. Riis:** That is 1 per cent of federal government programming. That is the kind of support, encouragement, and leadership that the present Liberal government and the previous Tory government were prepared to give to the small businessman in Canada! It is a sorry state of affairs. If the small business community ever wake up and look carefully at that legislation one day, look carefully at the financial structures across our country, it will become extremely clear to them who their friends really are.

I should like to turn now to the topic of competition. There is an illusion in this country that there exists competition among the banks, that interlocking directorships somehow facilitate competition in Canada. Well, we have all been introduced in the last couple of years to the infamous Canadi-