

To all intents and purposes, the Bill which is before us today is exactly the same as the last Bill, but with some technical amendments which were approved in the session that was held prior to the Bill dying on the Order Paper. You will also notice, Mr. Speaker, that the French text of the current Bill is quite different from that of its predecessor. It expresses in better French what the first text was saying. I am told that the language is now quite precise and indeed quite eloquent and elegant.

I would like to say a word about some provisions which you will not find in Bill C-17 as it now stands. Additional provisions have been drafted which I propose to table when I appear before the committee. They deal with measures which, in my opinion, will improve the lot of some of our citizens who must be better protected in bankruptcies and insolvencies. Hon. Members know that I am talking of wage earners, suppliers and farmers.

An Hon. Member: What about fishermen?

Mrs. Erola: Yes, fishermen are included as well. Fishers, be careful. I know there is not unanimity in or outside of the House to—

An Hon. Member: Fishers is not a word.

Mrs. Erola: Yes, it is a word which exists. It was indeed a biblical term.

● (1530)

I am asking Hon. Members opposite to make it possible for this Bill to go to committee so that there may be an opportunity to disclose publicly the approach that I want to follow. Of course, Members will be free to agree or disagree with my approach on some of the details of the Bill, but this will advance the debate and eventually enable us to put the best insolvency Act possible on the statutes to respond to the needs of our times.

While Bill C-17 is a good Bill, I welcome proposals for improvements. Many of its numerous provisions represent a reasonable compromise between opposed interests. Indeed, every word of the Bill has been debated at great length in many forums. In fact, at the moment while I am speaking a seminar is being held by the Canadian Insolvency Association of Toronto at which the representatives of, I believe, six organizations that represent thousands of people will be expressing their views on this Bill. Of course, they are anxious to appear before the committee.

I agree that not everyone is pleased with each of its measures, but if one believes that the Bill should not be proceeded with at all for that reason, it would be a great disservice to our society. Therefore, I urge both Opposition Parties to support this Bill and let it proceed to committee without further discussion in the House. Let us get on with the new Act dealing with bankruptcy and insolvency because it is long overdue.

Insolvency Act

Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge): Mr. Speaker, the Minister has stated that the new insolvency Bill is a good piece of legislation. By and large I agree with her, and therefore, since it was introduced as Bill C-12, our Party has given the utmost co-operation in seeing that the legislation is passed.

Although there are many areas in the provisions of the Bill with which I disagree, I have received the assurance of the Minister that amendments will be heard after experts have been called. I believe that all sides of the House want to see Parliament draft the best possible Bill.

One of the great reservations that I have with respect to this process and the tremendous amount of work that has gone into this Bill is that for at least 15 years assiduous work has been done in drafting the new legislation, which is of great social and economic importance. The first bankruptcy Bill was drafted in 1919. The only significant amendments were made in 1949. At that time, there was absolutely no departure from the philosophy of the Bill in 1919.

Modern commercial, economic and social policies have changed dramatically since 1919 and 1949. There is a profound need for us to deal with modern commerce as it exists on the streets. Having said that, the concern that I wish to express applies not only to the bankruptcy Bill but to many other Bills for which the Minister is responsible. She has heard my criticism and I believe that it is valid.

In the last eight Speeches from the Throne we have heard of the Government's intention to put forward legislation with respect to competition. Indeed, legislation does come forward, but there is not the political will to ensure that it becomes reality by being passed into law. We have heard promises with respect to copyright legislation. We have seen important proposals with respect to copyright, but nothing seems to get done. There were promises with respect to the Patent Act, but we will not see it. I hope that we will see amendments made to the Interest Act before the end of this session.

The point is that we are now in the month of May discussing second reading of a Bill which is of great social and economic consequence. This Party wants to see the matter get into committee as soon as possible. We understand our obligation to allow individuals and interest groups to tell Members of the House the good and bad aspects of the Bill. We cannot deny people the right to appear before committees. In this case I am talking about the Canadian Bar Association, which has certain concerns and I am talking about trustees and the Canadian Insolvency Association which the Minister has mentioned. It will take time to hear these views. As well, we must advertise for them to come to the committee. Although many briefs have already been submitted under Bill C-12, other briefs are to follow.

I am pleased and I applaud the fact that we are proceeding with this Bill, but the reality is that by the time the committee commences its meeting, in two or three weeks it will be June. I hope that I am wrong, but I do not foresee this good legislation being passed.