

Canada Co-operatives Association Bill

is not competition, it is co-operation. Their purpose is quite different. Their purpose is not to make a profit for those people who engage in them. Their purpose is to provide goods and services at cost to their members.

• (4:50 p.m.)

In addition, they have a whole different set of values. Their idea is that people develop and grow, and society develops and grows harmoniously and well through people working together to achieve a purpose which is in the interests of all of them. This is quite different from the ordinary concept of business along orthodox lines as we have it in Canada. I certainly could not put it more succinctly and briefly than a little pamphlet which I have here from the co-operative movement of Saskatchewan, titled "Co-ops are People." This title is a good reason for not sending the bill to the legal committee but to the Standing Committee on National Health and Welfare if the minister is not quite ready yet to have his own committee put into operation. However, I am very pleased to know now that he wants his own committee, and a bill such as this is an important reason for establishing it.

This pamphlet reads in part:

When a person joins a co-operative organization he automatically enters the co-operative movement, a worldwide brotherhood of people in all walks of life, all with the same basic purpose and accepting the same co-operative principles. He has become a member of a great international society dedicated to the belief that ordinary people can co-operate in managing their own economic and social affairs.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that that is the basic differentiation between the co-operative movement and all other organizations and business ventures. It believes that ordinary people can manage their own economic and social affairs.

A co-operative is an open and voluntary association in which the members organize to supply their needs through mutual self-help. The motive of production and distribution is service.

Like families, co-ops are groups of people sharing advantages and responsibilities. Co-ops form a broad "community" engaged in marketing, manufacturing, distributing, consuming, finance, service and education.

This legislation introduces something new, and the minister is quite correct in believing that the time has long been overdue for a bill of this kind which recognizes that the co-operative movement is basically different from the ordinary business concern.

From talking to people in the co-operative movement some of us have learned that the absence of federal co-operative legislation of this character has meant that the pattern of co-operative development in Canada has gone along provincial and local lines rather than federal. Now, the movement has grown to the stage where it needs co-ordination, and where it is ready for the federal umbrella which this legislation will provide. Co-operatives are not an end in themselves. They are a method to help those who participate in them to grow and mature, to improve the quality of their lives, and to strengthen their freedom and independence. The role of the govern-

ment should be to help co-operatives achieve these important objectives.

I believe that the scope and consequences of this legislation will go far beyond what we may foresee at the moment. For instance, I think this legislation will help people to run and direct their own affairs. All decisions made by the members of a co-op are made by them and no one else, after discussion of the facts. One of the needs of which we are terribly conscious in Canada is to have people participate in the running of their own affairs at the local level, and all the way up to the federal level. The co-operative movement can encourage people, through practical participation in co-ops, to learn this particular skill.

In the second place, and I think this should be dear to the heart of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the co-operative movement can become an even greater force than it is now in helping people become intelligent consumers. The minister, quite rightly, is always giving advice to consumers, telling them that if they do not want to be taken in by various marketing practices they should become intelligent and sharp consumers.

Members of co-ops learn to do this not just merely by comparing prices on shelves but by participating in group discussions on their own affairs where they learn about marketing practices, buying practices, and good consumer practices. The minister wishes that we had more Ralph Naders in Canada. By promoting co-operatives we can help with the birth, development and maturing of Ralph Naders all over Canada.

Co-operatives could help Canadians in other ways. When they are strong enough they can be an effective factor in controlling prices. These days the minister worries about methods of doing that without appearing to effect direct control.

Some years ago when I was on a visit to Sweden I learned how Swedish co-operatives, in a number of instances, had been able not only to hold prices constant but to reduce them. One specific example was that of General Electric which had a monopoly to manufacture electric light bulbs in that country. The Swedish co-ops decided to break that monopoly. They built a factory which they called Luma. Even while the walls of the Luma factory were rising, the price of bulbs began to come down in Sweden. By the time the Luma factory was producing its own light bulbs, the prices of bulbs had been greatly reduced. Other successes like this have been achieved by the Swedish co-operative movement.

The co-operative movement has been acting as a brake or steadying factor on run-away prices, and a factor in reducing prices of goods and services to the ordinary consumer.

Mr. Speaker: Order, it being five o'clock the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, notices of motions and public bills.

[Mrs. MacInnis.]