

Bills of Exchange Act

of North America. I guess they wanted a token socialist! I had a very interesting meeting with some of the groups. I got the feeling that the bad boys, as the consumer industry is sometimes labelled, wanted to change to be more in harmony with the needs and aspirations of our society. I am glad to see that some of these changes are coming about. I would not be surprised if one of the reasons they are somewhat more attractive today than when they appeared before our committee in 1966 and 1967 is the indication by the government that if it has to act, it will. Unfortunately, it acts too slowly. However, it is quite obvious now that the power to act is with the government.

The business oriented attitudes exist and survive only because the government, as a representative of the people, wishes them to do so. If the people of this country, acting through their government, wish it to be otherwise, it is quite obvious where the power lies. The government can act to change things. This realization is not only taking place in the consumer credit industry, but in other industries as well. In my opinion, it is having a very good effect. The people in the industry know that in the long run their survival depends on being able to make a case to the public. They must be able to justify their existence in terms of the social benefits or services they provide to society. They realize that profit alone cannot be the sole criterion for the retention of their place in society. They must go beyond that.

I suggested at that meeting that we should be thinking in terms of providing a fixed sum of credit. I used the arbitrary figure of \$25,000, but that does not necessarily have to be the figure. A line of credit does not come automatically to a person. It may be drawn against for various reasons. Since this is a credit-oriented society, we might as well take a somewhat more intelligent and imaginative view of the problem than we have done in the past. Each person in our society should have a line of credit on which he can draw. Those who cannot take advantage of the so-called middle class benefits of recreation, attending university and other advantages, will be able to use this drawing right. It could be used for purchasing a home or furniture, starting up a business of their own, or for a number of other things which will contribute to the happiness of their family and perhaps the matter of their life. This seems to me a more rational way of considering credit. There is precedent. I can recall, as an airman

coming back from the war in 1945, that there were all kinds of opportunities open to us. Canada was good to its returned soldiers. We could use the credit we had built up during our overseas service to go into business, or we could use it to go to a university. Many people got their education as a result of benefits made available through arrangements of this kind. Others took advantage of the Veterans Land Act to build homes for themselves. The options were available to us.

• (2:30 p.m.)

I believe an extension of this idea is needed so that it would apply to everyone in our society. As things are, some people can get credit much more easily than others. There is a tendency to think along these lines—that if a person shows an aptitude to go on to a higher education, the country will support him in an almost unlimited way. But the same thinking applies, to some extent, to farmers and businessmen. But there is nothing for the people who most desperately need aid in this country, the poor and the underprivileged. This seems to be a defect in our system.

For my part I would prefer to see lines of credit extended to people in our society than the introduction of a guaranteed annual income. There is a place for a guaranteed income, of course—for those who are unable to work or unable for one reason or another to take advantage of the opportunities which may arise—but I think it would be far preferable to give people an opportunity to help themselves. This could be done by making lines of credit available. Instead of subsidizing housing, for example, why do we not simply allow a person to draw the amount of money he needs to purchase a home? There would probably have to be some element of subsidization involved but I think it would be better to subsidize at that point. Such a program does not rule out other reforms which are of importance in our society, but I do believe we have an opportunity of helping people who do not normally have a line of credit upon which they can draw. If credit were made available to them they would not be obliged to make use of it all. They could use a portion of it, and show their ability to handle it. If we were to provide credit facilities for those who need them badly and are unable to obtain them we would really be doing something significant in the way of a consumer credit program.

I am glad we have finally got around to implementing a policy which obviously should