

● (9:00 p.m.)

This is a system we should consider in connection with firms which decide to close down a Canadian plant. In an age of automation and change, this is something which should be considered in connection with all industry. Many people would move from one industry to another readily if they knew they could take their pension, which they no doubt earned, from the company. I do not want to belabour the matter but, rather, just to mention the Canadian ownership angle which is good for all of us. For this reason, we in this group will support the bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I must advise the House that if the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) speaks now, he will close the debate.

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words in closing the debate. First of all I think hon. members who have contributed to the debate, for the points they have raised. In so far as the technical points raised very ably by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) are concerned, I think it might be better if I deal with those points in the Standing Committee, where they can be discussed back and forth with answers given in detail, rather than on the floor of the House.

I do want to make reference to the fact that much has been said during the debate about the appropriate committee to which this bill should be referred. First I want to say that I, of course, do not determine this question or say to which committee a particular bill should be referred. That is a job for my colleague, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen).

An hon. Member: You mean its all his fault?

Mr. Basford: I am not blaming him at all. I am giving him credit for this decision. Having listened to the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton), I know that if the bill gets to the committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, he is so fond of talking that it will never get out. Surely there is merit in having it go to the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. This is the decision of my friend the President of the Privy Council, and as House Leader for the government I think he has made a very wise decision. We have heard much this afternoon about the Antigonish movement and the co-operative movement at St. Xavier. We heard from a number of distinguished graduates from St. Xavier. I wish we could have heard from one of the more distinguished graduates we have in this House, and perhaps the most distinguished lecturer, the Government House Leader.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Basford: That hon. member has throughout his life exhibited sympathy for the co-operative movement as well as support and great leadership. We do not do this very often, because we cannot, but I compliment him for the

Canada Co-operatives Association Bill

support, guidance and friendship I have had in steering this bill through interdepartmental and cabinet discussions. It was the decision of the House Leader that this bill should go to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

I would agree with the remarks of my very close friend, the hon. member for St. John's East, that we should have in this House a standing committee on consumer affairs. I should like nothing better than to have such a committee, but there are a number of committees of the House now and they are determined by a committee of this House. We have had numerous committees considering the rules of this House. They have been all-party committees and they have come in with recommendations. Not one of those committees has recommended the establishment of a standing committee on consumer affairs.

I wonder where the members of the Conservative party were when these committees studied the rules of the House. Where were the members of the NDP when these committees considered rule changes? These committees never recommended a committee on consumer affairs. Were these members sitting silent on those committees? Do we only hear from them here on the floor of the House? I wish they would get busy on the committees which study these matters and bring in a recommendation. I assure them that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I take it that the minister's references to the committee are relevant to the question of to which committee this legislation is to be referred. If I am not correct in that assumption, I think the minister might very quickly bring his remarks back to relevancy.

Mr. Basford: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your bringing the House to order, and I appreciate the fact that you did not have the benefit of hearing the debate this afternoon. It was suggested that this bill be referred to a standing committee on consumer affairs, but there is no such committee. I was addressing myself to the suggestion that there should be such a committee and why there was not, namely, because the opposition members have not done their job on the various committees. This House has had a considerable number of revisions to the rules, and it is a House committee that decides what committees we should have.

I am quite happy with the motion before the House that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. There have not really been any valid arguments presented as to why it should go to another committee, or which suggest there is any greater expertise on co-operative matters in any other Standing Committee. The Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, for which we must all have the greatest esteem, has no greater expertise on co-operative matters than has the Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. The Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs has no greater expertise in these matters than the Justice and Legal Affairs Committee. We do not want to get into