

*Bank Act*

Tory blue, navy blue, little boy blue, Fauntleroy blue, or anything else.

● (2040)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member has not made a point of order. Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the hon. member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke.

**Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East-Revelstoke):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak about the Bank Act. As a former administrator and mayor of a municipality for eight years I saw what has happened to small communities. When people try to bring industry into the area, the first thing they do is go to the community and look at the number of banks to determine what banking facilities are available. In my riding the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce gave notification last year that it was closing its branch at Radium. This is a heavily touristed and industrial area. It has a large lumber mill. Had this happened, these workers and small businessmen would have been forced to bundle their money each day and travel to another community to deposit it. The workers would have gone to the other community to cash their cheques and purchase their goods there.

Members of the Conservative and Liberal parties stood up at election time at meetings of chambers of commerce and told these small businessmen they were there to protect their interests. They said they were the ones who were fighting for the free enterprise system.

There are no regulations in this Bank Act which would stop this kind of centralization of the banks. These banks in small communities have a responsibility to those communities whether they are making a profit or not, because these banks are given special banking privileges throughout Canada. They must fulfil those responsibilities in those communities.

I should like to touch upon another matter as I do not think we have paid enough attention to it, and that is in relation to the organization of bank workers. This is a very serious matter. In 1977 the Canada Labour Relations Board ruled that banks could be organized on a branch by branch basis. Since that time banks have vigorously opposed any move to unionize their workers. Only 65 of the 7,500 branches in Canada have been organized. Most of the workers in banks are women, and the banks have successfully used that fact to intimidate those workers. They have intimidated them in a way they would never have dared had they been dealing with seasoned industrial workers.

Some 67 complaints of unfair labour practices have been registered with the Canada Labour Relations Board against banks. Banks have more complaints against them than any other industrial sector. In 1977-78 complaints against banks comprised one-third of all those received by the Canada Labour Relations Board. It is a disgrace for any elected

member who establishes regulations for banks without setting the working conditions for the people working in those banks.

The hon. member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson) has touched upon some of the tactics these banks rely on, including the firing of staff for union activity. Can you imagine going to work in the morning and finding that because of some of your activities you are no longer employable? Some banks transfer their workers who are involved in union activities, from one branch to another. The hon. member for Burnaby has said this already, but I think it is worthy of repeating because these things happen in banks, and we cannot allow them to continue.

Banks hire additional workers at branches involved in certification, in order to increase the number of votes, thereby stopping any certification program. The banks hold group and individual meetings during working hours to apply pressure on the workers not to unionize. Often those meetings are attended by high ranking officials of the bank. Some branches require the workers at unionized branches to make up cash shortages at the end of each day, a practice not followed in non-unionized branches. Can you imagine going to work and finding that you have to make up a shortage at the end of the day? Banks have withheld annual pay increases at those branches which have been organized, or branches that are awaiting a first contract, and the banks have been careful to inform all employees of this distinction.

Let me quote from a recent report on women and unions issued by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

While these employer tactics are not unfamiliar in any union organizing attempt, the banks have applied them in a particularly centralized and coordinated manner with obvious co-operation between different banks. Extensive legal advice has been obtained and profitably used, so that proving illegality is very difficult. The banks have the time, money and personnel not only to mount a strong anti-union campaign, but to maintain the opposition for years if necessary. Needless to say branch workers feel that it is difficult to oppose these wealthy and monolithic institutions. They are right.

The banks do not stop their intimidation once a branch has been certified. As I have already pointed out, they were found guilty of withholding pay increases to unionized workers and forced to pay them back wages. That is not all. I should like to recount the history of the bank workers' struggle at a branch right here in Ottawa.

In February, 1979, Local 2104 of the Union of Bank Employees was certified at the Commerce Bank on Carling at Preston. After certification the bank began to apply what a former shop steward described as subtle pressure. The bank was sticky about time schedules and converted to an hourly wage from a weekly salary so it could dock pay for lateness and absences for such things as mid-day doctors' appointments. In March the bank was decertified by the workers. The workers could not take this kind of harassment any longer and decertified themselves. It is shocking for any of us to stand here and discuss the Bank Act while allowing the workers of that kind of an institution to be dealt with in that way. The women workers simply did not feel they could successfully compete against one of the largest corporations in the world.