

Government Orders

• (1650)

This is one of the great tragedies of the work done in the House, in committee, and by many of our great public servants. A lot of people in the country do not know these operations exist. They are just not aware. Obviously this is not the kind of story the press will cover because it is good news and is not controversial enough.

When there is an organization like the Export Development Corporation providing assistance, not just to larger corporations but to small and medium sized operators, we have to get the message out. We must.

I support the bill in every respect. In fact I remember the very first time I had some involvement with the government back in 1985 at the Business Opportunities in Canada conference in Toronto. The president of Investment Canada at that time was a Mr. Paul Labbé. I believe he is the current president of the Export Development Corporation. I remember when we did that work in 1985 and 1986 that this man had real feeling and real passion for small Canadian exporters.

All too often in this House we are quick to pick out someone in the Public Service or a particular branch of government that is not really living up to the Public Service objective it is supposed to. However this is a good example of an organization and its leader, Paul Labbé, and all its counsellors. I have had people in my community and in other parts of Toronto who have had experience with the Export Development Corporation, and they have only good things to say about the officers who represent its various aspects.

On behalf of my party I am happy to stand in support of the particular piece of legislation. I have one concern or one qualifier to put on the table. I hope the government will treat the marketing, the awareness program or the promotional program of the Export Development Corporation the same way it is now treating the Small Businesses Loans Act.

Mr. Lyle Dean MacWilliam (Okanagan—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say a few words on this particular bill.

Perhaps I want to make my comments a little more general in terms of the whole question of export trade as

it pertains to Canada. Obviously as we all know nations engage in trade to try to benefit their economies. It would seem logical that agreements between two nations or agreements between a number of nations to expand trading opportunities between those partners would be beneficial to the economies of the nations involved.

That is only the case if the trading relationship between participating countries is fair and equitable. We have seen that is not the case in the current free trade agreement between Canada and its partner to the south, the United States.

The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement has not really been about freer trade and increasing exports as the argument has been placed. After all, that is what this bill is talking about. It is talking about expanding export opportunities.

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This trade agreement, to which Canada is struggling to adjust, has really been about greater access to Canadian resources for the U.S. market. It has really been about removing the kinds of barriers that have existed to the free movement of capital, goods and services to establish a free trade playing field for the multinational corporations, which are largely based in the United States.

This agreement, which has been in place since January 1, 1989, is really about reducing the ability of our provincial and federal governments to establish the kinds of economic priorities that are very much a part of the political priority of any democratic government. It is about the reduced ability of this country to control its own destiny, to control its own economy.

As we are talking about trade in this bill, I want to say that if Canada had really wanted a free trade agreement, if Canada had really wanted to embrace the concept of freer trade, then it would have needed a very short piece of legislation, a very succinct agreement between Canada and the U.S. It would basically be only one line: The parties involved, the nations involved, in this case Canada and its partner, the United States, would agree to eliminate all remaining tariffs that are currently in place on both goods and services. Said and done. It is very simple. That would have been free trade.