

Export Development Act

guarantee which will be available are very substantial. The Parliamentary Secretary has referred to this point and so have hon. members in our party and in the New Democratic Party.

The changes with regard to section 29 of the act, and the rights which would empower the corporation to participate in joint financing arrangements with a third party without obtaining the approval of the Minister of Finance, are novel and constitute a departure from the original legislation. There are some interesting provisions in clause 7 of the bill on which I will question the Parliamentary Secretary later. In clause 8 there is provision that a contract may be authorized without requiring the government of the country in which an investment is made to give a written assurance. All these proposals constitute a departure from the provisions of the original legislation. The amount of money involved is of such magnitude as to indicate that this is not a completely different bill but certainly a bill of a different kind.

I think it is of interest to look at the history of the bill. For 25 years we had the Export Credits Insurance Act. I think that all governments which were operating while it was in effect did a pretty good job. The hon. member for Prince Edward-Hastings (Mr. Hees) is not here, and I know that with his usual modesty he probably would not want to be here while I was saying some nice things about him. As Minister of Trade and Commerce in the administration of the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker), he was responsible for inaugurating a speed-up and improving and enlarging the administration of the act. He did a good job of selling the products of this country, with his ability to be exceedingly persuasive, to hear the right things and sometimes not to hear and see the things he did not want to hear and see. He has demonstrated this ability when asking questions in the House, when his right eye and ear are not as attuned to the Chair as the Chair might wish. He did a tremendous job in promoting the exports of this country.

In 1969, after 25 years, the present government brought down new legislation. That legislation received royal assent on June 27, 1969, and was proclaimed on October 1 of that year. A year later, when the present session opened, the changes in the bill with which we are now dealing were referred to in the Speech from the Throne and contained in its list of legislative proposals. In other words, almost a year to the day from the time the original bill was proclaimed, very substantial amendments are put forward.

• (8:10 p.m.)

This new bill was obviously ready in October, 1970, Mr. Speaker. It was sent to the other place rather than here. This indicates that the bill had been drafted for some time. It will be perfectly clear to anyone who examines the bill that the changes with which we are now dealing must have been contemplated and brought to the attention of the government within a few months of the other bill being passed. I think this is very significant. This government has received great credit for reorganizing the cabinet system. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is called the great administrator because he

[Mr. Baldwin.]

organized the cabinet committee structure. He has stated that everything will now go smoothly, efficiently and without delay. On the contrary, with this bill we see a situation which I have pointed out many times. I am not referring to this bill in particular, but often badly prepared bills are presented to this House. They do not take into account their impact on the public which they are designed to assist. Bills are introduced which are hastily conceived and not ready to be presented to the House. What more proof do we need than this measure? These substantial changes must have been contemplated within six or eight months of the original bill being proclaimed. In other words, the original bill was imperfect.

I know it is the fashion for a great many of the intellectual, pompous and pontifical commentators who unofficially belong to the volunteer part of the Liberal propaganda machine to heap great praise upon this government, its efficiency and the way it operates. They swoon when the right hon. gentleman who occupies the position of Prime Minister is within their range. What absolute drive!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Baldwin: We were involved in a very interesting situation yesterday and again today. Members of this party and of the New Democratic Party made suggestions with regard to the very important legislation which the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) introduced in this House. The minister must have had some doubts about this legislation. He indicated that in his view the legislation should be sent to a committee and that the committee should have absolute freedom to interview witnesses. However, it was necessary to take drastic action in this House in order to bring about that to which we are entitled. This bill is an indication of the wisdom of that course. There is no suggestion that this government, its ministers and their advisers have the monopoly on wisdom, good sense and economic provision.

Mr. Basford: That is why we straightened out the committee system.

Mr. Baldwin: I want to make that quite clear, because a number of bills introduced in this House are not original in nature; they are amending legislation. My recollection is that 50 per cent to 70 per cent of the legislative list attached to the Speech from the Throne consists of amending bills, many of them amendments to acts passed by this government. It is very essential that all legislation be thoroughly examined by unbiased, independent committees with the assistance of necessary witness. There have been instances when the committee has made a thorough examination and it has not been necessary to waste our time in considering a matter and sending it back to the same committee.

I do not know the views of the Parliamentary Secretary in this instance. I hope when he replies he will indicate, if he has authority on behalf of the government, that if it is the view of the committee he and the minister will agree that this is an important bill involving