

Export Development Act

borrow or put at risk \$60 billion. Good grief! It is staggering. The Liberals say, "We will look after your best interests, folks. You need not worry. The Liberals are at the helm. Not to fear, we will protect you. We will spend that \$60 billion and we do not need to bother coming back to Parliament and ask an ordinary bunch of Parliamentarians what it is all about. The people of Canada, they are not entitled to know anything. Why should they know? After all, it is only their money."

What we have in so many of these Crown corporations is what I guess you would call a linear type of relationship. The Crown corporation reports to the Government and then the Government, in a sort of half baked way, reports to Parliament. It is a straight line: Crown corporation to Government to Parliament. But what gets reported to Parliament really and truly? The Hon. Member opposite smiles, Mr. Speaker. He knows what gets to Parliament: zilch. The only time anything comes before Parliament is after the fact, after we have lost \$125 million on Consolidated Computer, after we have spent \$700 million on VIA Rail, after we have lost \$2 billion on Canadair.

These are small embarrassments to the Government, but if it were sincerely interested in having this institution of Parliament function in a responsible way, it would include Parliament in the decision-making process. Instead of a linear relationship, we would have a triangular relationship where Government and Parliament were equal partners together with the Crown corporations in achieving the given objectives and mandate they have. That is a concept and philosophy which is completely foreign to the other side, I know, because they fundamentally do not believe in this institution. They do not believe they should be held accountable to Parliament regarding the money they spend.

Did they ever come before Parliament and present a financial plan for any corporation to let the Canadian people understand what is going on? Oh, no! They say, "We have to so confuse the issue as not to disclose the real facts about what happens in these Crown corporations. To do so might create some public debate. It might cause some real, true concern with the Canadian people. They might start to react to some of these enormous losses. Therefore, the picture is to be clouded." Oh, people will be told what happens after the event. However, the Government will never really come clean and tell them what its plans are for the future.

● (1740)

Therefore, what this Bill is about and what our amendments are about has everything to do with fiscal responsibility, accountability to Parliament, and the role of directors in Crown corporations and their responsibility to the people of Canada. That is what we are fighting about, and that is why we will not support Bill C-110. Gentlemen, you will have to trample on us with your majority.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to follow my colleague from Calgary who has done such an excellent and thoughtful job of presenting our concerns with Bill C-110. As he has very clearly said today, our

concern is that Parliament be allowed to participate in decisions that affect Canadian people. Those are the nuts and bolts of the whole debate. That is what we are trying to address and discuss today. We on this side of the House feel that that is absolutely essential.

We are not, as such, discussing the Export Development Corporation, even though that is the legislation with which we are dealing. We are discussing the principles surrounding that particular corporation and what the Bill is trying to accomplish. We are not questioning the value of exports to Canada. Certainly, no one would understand that more than someone like myself who represents an agricultural riding where exports are important, an area where we depend on exports of grain, beef, various agricultural products and on exports of natural gas and oil, all of those things that make our economy what it is, including the lumber industry.

We understand the values of exporting. We understand the importance of that particular industry and goal, I guess one could call it, in terms of my particular riding. However, we are very concerned that Parliament, meaning both sides of the House, be allowed to have some input, some opportunity to consider and discuss something that we feel is very important to the Canadian taxpayer.

Essentially, what is being questioned at this time is Parliament. We as individual Members of Parliament are being questioned as to our ability to protect the interest of those people whom we represent from coast to coast or, as the Hon. Member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) would say, "from sea to sea". We are being requested to stop and look at how the taxpayer's money is being spent, to consider whether it is being spent wisely. We are also looking to the accountability of the Civil Service, employees of Crown corporations. That is another group which must respond to the taxpayers of the country because it is spending the taxpayers' money. Ultimately, it comes down to ourselves as Parliamentarians because we must carry the responsibility for it. Even though it is slightly removed from Parliament, it is still a very important issue and one for which we must take responsibility. Therefore, we on this side of the House attach great importance to Bill C-110 and the amendments that we put forward today.

Something that happened over the summer made me realize the importance of how we approach and handle the entire issue. A poll indicated that a very large number of Canadians did not feel that Parliamentarians were representing them or protecting their interests. As a Member of the House I had to stop and think about the implications, the significance. So often we on this side of the House feel extremely frustrated simply because we cannot get at the information we need from the opposite side of the House, whether it be concerning a Crown corporation, a department or a particular ministry. We have that frustration and it is no wonder that the Canadian people who are sitting out there without the day to day exposure that we have in this Chamber are frustrated and feel that this place is not responding to their particular needs. We can only respond to their needs when we as Parliamentarians, collectively, have the power to do something about it or to