

*Private Members' Business*

pressures. These economies, directed by governments or government agencies, have been found to be inefficient and incapable of stimulating economic growth, so that the people they were supposed to help have finally demanded a change.

This change is evident in economic liberalization, with the government not intervening in markets.

Experience has shown that competitive initiative is the only true way to ensure sustained creation of wealth for all. Nevertheless, today, in spite of that development, we are faced with a debate on the following question: Is the government better suited than private industry to promote the sale of its own products? Note that this is not just any industry. This is not an emerging industry or a dying one which might appeal for government aid. No. We are talking about a well-established industry, Canada's mining industry, which is among the strongest in the world. We are being asked to give assistance to an industry unmatched anywhere in the world. That is paradoxical, Madam Speaker. It is even the world's largest mining industry, the most active on export markets, the technological leader. Is it credible to call for government help in such a situation, such a position of strength? Business people do not stop telling us that everything depends on globalization. I must say that our mining and metals industry went global a long time ago. It formed international partnerships and opened offices in many countries so that it could have outlets throughout the world and long-assured access to all these markets and sources.

How can the government do better than private enterprise which has established its own markets, distribution networks and contacts? I am not suggesting that the initiatives taken by the industry are always right, far from it. I am simply wondering how, at the moment, the government could do better than our industry.

How could a Crown corporation do better? The government has sold some Crown corporations because it recognizes that the private sector is better equipped to take advantage of export opportunities. For example, a Crown corporation can find itself in a situation where it must make major investments for expansion purposes, to increase its profits and even to survive under the

circumstances. Where would the funds come from if the government gave priority to its fight against the deficit? We would have to get funds to support this industry. A private company, on the other hand, could go to the money market and find quickly the needed capital to meet its objectives. Why call on a co-operative agency with the government interfering? Again, private industry can do just as well or even better under the circumstances.

This motion also seems based on the assumption that there is a homogeneous Canadian industry with the same objectives in the world marketplace. Nothing could be further from the truth, Madam Speaker. Canadian mineral producers are competing against each other as well as against foreign firms. All companies do not have the same objectives or strategies. The rivalry between them is indeed one of the best ways to make an industry competitive on the international marketplace.

• (1840)

In keeping with their development strategy, some companies have made huge investments the world over, and indeed they have reached the hallmark of excellence in certain fields. Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I fail to see how Canadian industry would support such an initiative. As a matter of fact, industry would look upon this or any similar measure as a serious threat, and I am sure it would come out fighting mad. What I am trying to say, Madam Speaker, is that government mechanisms are ill-fitted to play the kind of role advocated in today's motion. Fully aware of that, the Conservative government wants to steer clear of the market and concentrate on governing the country. Of course one can wonder whether government does have a role in openly promoting mineral exports. The government has a role for sure, but its authority does not give it *carte blanche* to direct all activities.

Although the government does not have a role to play on the market itself, I agree it should create and maintain an economic or trade environment where supply and demand can operate freely to balance market pressures. We all know that no market is totally free, that such a concept is beyond reality in any case. Among other things, this brings to mind tariff barriers, customs duties, restrictions on monetary movements, regulations