

Export Development Act

small and medium-sized businesses, but the Progressive Conservative Party was opposed to the report's recommendations.

I would just like to take a few minutes to mention something. Yesterday I was listening to the Member for Timiskaming (Mr. MacDougall) who was criticizing the Government for its approval of financing for Bombardier. I think he should be delighted, because if Canada is to continue to expand its high technology markets and maintain its position in the transportation industry, it is absolutely vital that the Canadian Government should intervene in the case of transactions worth nearly \$1 billion, involving the manufacture of special trains for the New York subway. We are talking about the production of 825 subway cars over the next five years, and I think that instead of criticizing the Government, the Hon. Member should bear in mind that this is a \$1 billion contract, and that one billion dollars' worth of manufactured products exported abroad means 43,000 jobs. This particular contract means jobs for Canadians. Are we supposed to let the competition, French or German interests, win the contract for producing those goods? I think the Government acted wisely in protecting jobs, expanding the Canadian technology industry and awarding the contract to Bombardier, a Canadian company. Maybe if the company had been in another province, the Conservatives would not have been as upset, but I challenge the Conservatives to come to Quebec and say what they said about Bombardier, a company that happens to be in the Province of Quebec and that is going to create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on about our Crown corporations. I am not blind to their defects, and I am convinced that administratively speaking, there should be more control, but I would challenge those people who criticize Canadair. When the federal Government acquired Canadair, it provided 700 jobs. Today, that number is 7,000, people who are working on the development of our high technology industry, and as a result, today, the Province of Quebec has almost 50 per cent of Canada's aerospace industry, and that is because the Canadian Government invested in Canadair.

[English]

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great care to the hon. gentleman who just took his seat, and I am amazed that he seems to have missed the whole point and thrust of this debate. No one, Sir, questions the need for, or indeed the good work of, the Export Development Corporation. That is not at issue here. It has done good work. The hon. gentleman mentioned the Bombardier sale, and that is only one example of many which could be cited in this House to justify the continued existence of this very important corporation.

However, what we are talking about here, Mr. Speaker, is parliamentary accountability. That is what this debate is all about. That is what Motions Nos. 3 and 5, put forward by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn), are all about. They would have the means of introducing some degree of control and accountability into the operations of this corpo-

ration. Surely we as parliamentarians have a responsibility to ensure that these Crown corporations are not allowed to operate out of control, but that they will in fact be accountable to the taxpayers of this country through their representatives in this House.

The Government, by this Bill, seeks to expand the borrowing capacity of this corporation without the need for further reference to Parliament. That is what the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington) was talking about, and that is the issue before the House. That is what we, as the Official Opposition, are putting forward as argument, and a very valid and important argument it is. It goes to the very guts, the very heart and soul of Parliament.

Last year, Sir, the Auditor General in his report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1982, said something which deserves to be repeated because it sums up the whole rationale of this debate. It sums up the whole rationale of the arguments which have been put forward by the Official Opposition. I quote from that report:

Parliament is becoming further isolated from an increasing portion of government activities. The growing practice of using Crown-owned corporations to conduct a widening range of government activities has so strained the capability of the existing accountability framework that Parliament may not be able to exercise its fundamental responsibility for overseeing receipts and expenditures of public funds.

As my colleague the Hon. Member for Capilano has said, that, Sir, is the issue. That is what this debate is all about.

We recall that a few years ago the late Auditor General of Canada, in one of his reports, expressed his concern that Parliament was in danger of losing control over the purse strings of public expenditure. I believe, Sir, that we have in fact lost control. I believe we have arrived at a point in time where we have lost control. That loss of control is exemplified very dramatically by this Bill which is before the House, which would render this Crown corporation virtually unaccountable in terms of the substantial increase in borrowing authority which it has been given.

This House is currently operating under provisional rules which were brought in by the Special Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure. That committee has been sitting for 18 months now and no subject has taken more of the time of that Committee than the subject of accountability, control over Government expenditures and how Parliament can regain the control it had over public spending. I do not have to recite the growth of the national debt, the growth of the deficit, the hidden deficit. That has all been put on the record. But the deficit will still grow, the hidden deficit will still grow and the national debt will still grow unless and until Parliament regains control over public spending.

● (1200)

The Special Committee has submitted nine reports to this House. We are currently operating under the recommendations of the third report in the form of provisional rules. The House will have to make a decision on those recommendations and provisional rules by the end of the current parliamentary year. The Hon. Member for Capilano co-chaired a subcommit-