

Export Credits Insurance Act

seat at this point, and the minister might say a word on that last question I have asked.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): As far as the Ming Sung transaction is concerned, I know my hon. friend is familiar with the situation. For a time the payments were made when due. Then when the iron curtain descended over China, the payments were stopped. There are some Chinese funds held in Washington. Perhaps we have a very good claim on them. I would not say that the possibility of ultimately collecting the balance of the payments due is hopeless. However, at the moment the responsibility of this government under the credit arrangements is being carried out and the banks are being paid the amounts due under that loan. The Ming Sung transaction involved insurance carried by the government itself, as my hon. friend knows, under part II of the act.

As to fluctuations in claims paid, that depends on the credit position of the various countries in the world. I would not blame Brazil particularly. Argentina has been slow. One or two other countries have been slow in paying their accounts. But while exchange difficulties have been accentuated in the last year or so in certain South American countries, we find that the accounts are being paid although perhaps not on the due date. For example, Brazil is catching up on its outstanding indebtedness to this country. Aside from the claim to which I referred of \$138,000 which has been written off as irrecoverable, we have reason to hope that sooner or later we shall recover all the outstanding payments that have been made on account of insurance written by the corporation.

Mr. Macdonnell: The minister gave a figure of \$235 million which somewhat surprised me by its smallness. Is that the accumulated business done over the ten years?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): That is correct, yes.

Mr. Macdonnell: Can the minister say the approximate amount of business outstanding at any one moment? For instance, can the minister give a rough figure as to how much business is outstanding at the present time?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): I could get the information by calling my officer down from the gallery, but would my hon. friend not agree that we could discuss this matter on the bill to better advantage? I will have them with me then on the floor of the house, and in the meantime I will take note of the question and make sure that I have the information here.

[Mr. Macdonnell.]

Mr. Macdonnell: And at the same time I should like the minister to give us up to the minute detailed figures with regard to Ming Sung.

Mr. Thatcher: I have a comment or two to make on the resolution and I should also like to ask the minister several questions. I think the resolution will receive almost unanimous support in the house since the corporation undoubtedly is promoting trade at a time when more trade is needed. I was rather interested to learn that the corporation is paying its way. If I understood the minister correctly, I think he said that since formed it has shown a profit of roughly \$1 million. I wonder if that profit would not be somewhat greater if it were not for the fact that the corporation is only taking risky insurance policies, and leaving the others to private companies. However, I suppose that is problematical.

There is one aspect of the operations of the corporation that I should like to have clarified this afternoon. It arises from a question which the hon. member for Kamloops asked in the house yesterday. He asked the minister whether or not exporters in Canada wishing to ship to iron curtain countries would be able to come under the provisions of this act. I think most of us in this group feel that this should be encouraged. Several days ago the Russian ambassador made certain overtures to this country indicating that he would like to see trade relations between Russia and Canada expanded. He said that Russia was going to send a trade attaché here and suggested that Russia might be willing to take some products we want to sell.

He mentioned wheat, meat, textiles and ships, I believe. It seems to me that there has been too much of an inclination throughout the country to write off these offers as valueless without examining them closely. I thought the minister gave a kind of negative answer yesterday. At page 2170 of *Hansard* he said:

... if any Canadian merchant can arrange trade with Soviet Russia, his application will be considered by the department.

It seems to me that the government should be a little more positive. I do not think anyone would accuse me of being a communist. I know that the Russians sometimes are not such good pay. Yet if there is an opportunity for us to expand our trade with Russia at this time I think we should go ahead and do it, and I think one of the first steps to do that would be to utilize this act. The applications of exporters or traders wishing to trade with iron curtain countries should be very carefully examined and the provisions of the