

Export Development Act

is spent. It must surely be ironic to people in the galleries, or people watching, Mr. Speaker, or to anyone who follows parliamentary debate it must be incredible, that the Government has the capacity to increase the debt, the contingent liability of Canadians, by \$15 billion, as is proposed in this Bill, without ever coming to Parliament for authority to do it.

Canadians understand that governments spend money. Canadians understand that governments raise money. Canadians understand that every year there is a budgetary process of some sort, as weak as it is.

Miss MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): It varies.

Mr. Bosley: Yes, the credibility of that process varies. It seems to be declining, I should say, Mr. Speaker, in the current context of government. However, at least there is some presentation to Parliament of numbers, even if in many cases Parliament never gets to vote on those numbers because they are Estimates which are referred to committees and are adopted whether they come back here or not. At least there is the presence of some semblance by the current Government of parliamentary authority over spending. In this case it is stunning, at the very least, for the Government to ask Parliament to double the potential borrowings and the potential gifts by the Government to the board of the corporation for investment. None of us have any objection to export financing. It is important. But to be asked to double the authority when only half the existing authority has been used—only half, according to the Department's own figures—when the rate of take-up of those authorities is about 10 per cent of the authority per year, when in fact there is apparently five years of authorities left, is surely beyond credibility, that the Government expects the House to sit still and take this Bill.

The Government so far, Mr. Speaker, appears to be unwilling to concede on any of the amendments moved by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South, any of them, and it is important to take all the amendments as a package in order to try to begin even the semblance of some parliamentary control over funds expended on behalf of the people of Canada to improve our exports. Every Canadian wants to improve those exports. Surely Hon. Members in the Government party, Mr. Speaker, understand that it is equally important for Canadians that they get a chance to see how their funds are expended, since they are their funds, directly and indirectly, in order to help those exports. Surely that is the principle on which Parliament was founded, and surely Members opposite can come to their senses pretty quickly on this point, Mr. Speaker.

● (1730)

Mr. John Thomson (Calgary South): Mr. Speaker, we have been debating this Bill and the amendments for the last few days and I guess the Members opposite, if they have been listening at all to what we have had to say, know that we feel very strongly about the thrust of Bill C-110. It really does not have to do with trade, as everyone knows. In spite of the fact that our friends from the NDP would have the public believe that because we are opposed to Bill C-110, we are not in

favour of trade, Bill C-110 does not have to do with trade at all. However, it has everything to do with fiscal responsibility and the lack of accountability to Parliament and the role of directors of Crown corporations. That is really the issue here.

There is no one in this Chamber who does not believe that Canada has to have trade. We live or die by trade. Over one third of our gross national product comes from trade, and everyone in this Chamber knows that the EDC has done a pretty good job of promoting trade in Canada. That is not the issue, Mr. Speaker. The issue is fiscal responsibility, accountability to Parliament and the people of Canada, the taxpayers, and the role directors should play in Crown corporations. That is what we are talking about when we debate this Bill and that is why we have taken such a very strong stand against this Bill.

When you talk about fiscal responsibility and the Liberal Government, it reminds me of kids in a candy store. We will have a little bit of this candy and a little bit of that candy. Is there any sense of priority at all? The Liberals can be all things to everyone in spending money as long as it is not theirs. What is a couple of billion dollars on Canadair? Nothing very serious. Or \$500 million for de Havilland? A paltry \$125 million lost on Consolidated Computer. The Liberal Government did not even come before Parliament with Consolidated Computer. The Minister responsible did not even know that it existed let alone that it lost \$125 million. Then there is VIA Rail, \$700 million. Just a drop in the bucket. Then the granddaddy of them all, PetroCan, \$7 billion. But we should not worry, it is ours. However, what I would like my fellow Canadians to know is that the \$30 billion deficit this Government has created is also ours. That is ours, as well as PetroCan.

To come back to the point, the public knows that there is something terribly wrong with the administration of Crown corporations in Canada, and that is what we are talking about in Bill C-110 this afternoon. They know there is a lack of fiscal responsibility, and this is why I find it incredibly difficult to understand the view of the Minister. He stood up the other day and said, yes, he agrees with a great deal of what has been said. He agrees that there should probably be a greater representation from the private sector on the board of directors, and he agrees that there should be a greater element of accountability to Parliament. But does he do anything about it? Nothing, absolutely nothing. He just stonewalls us.

There is no willingness to amend this legislation. The Liberals have no intention of amending this Bill so that the EDC will be accountable to Parliament. After all, why should it be accountable to Parliament? What is Parliament? Why should the Government be accountable to an ordinary bunch of Parliamentarians? It is a lot easier for them with their majority to trample all over the Parliamentarians, and that is what the Liberals are going to do on this Bill as sure as we are sitting here. This Government does not care, it simply does not care. It will not hold itself accountable to the Canadian people except at one time, that is, election time.

Here is a Bill before us which increases the ability of the corporation to go out on behalf of the Canadian taxpayer and