

Government Orders

Many other trading nations are offering their business sectors a wide range of financial services. These countries—the United States, Japan, Germany and France—make extensive support available to their business people through a variety of mechanisms. These often include sophisticated methods of entering into partnership relationships with them, including the provision of equity participation overseas and loans and guarantees to support foreign investments.

As the international marketplace is developed, an increasing number of Canadian businesses have complained that gaps have developed in the financial support available to them—take leasing, for example—either through EDC or commercial financial institutions. EDC has the talent, the creativity and the expertise to fill in those gaps, but under the current legislation it has had to scramble to the end of its legislative boundaries to be of assistance.

The proposed amendments to the Export Development Act would streamline the EDC and extend its capabilities in a way that would provide it with much greater flexibility in meeting the demands of the globalized marketplace.

I am hopeful that this will prove particularly enticing for small and medium sized companies on the threshold of internationalizing their business activities in defined circumstances that reflect the relatively static needs of the 1969 marketplace. That marketplace no longer represents the world in which Canadian business operates. Instead of simply defining a rigid new set of tasks for EDC, we want to give the corporation flexibility to respond more creatively to the type of dramatic changes that have already been affecting its customers.

We know international deals are often complex and time consuming, but we want EDC to be capable of overcoming stumbling blocks in the most efficient ways possible and to have the tools at hand to minimize delays. We want an EDC that offers the most streamlined services possible and an EDC that acts in partnership with both customers and private financial institutions. We want an EDC that can shift with the marketplace the way Canadian entrepreneurs must also shift with the marketplace. We know that change is the norm in today's marketplace and that Canada has to be ready for it. So, for those reasons I strongly encourage members to support this legislation.

• (1540)

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Etobicoke North): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the legislation which the government has brought forward today. I welcome it for a number of reasons but I want to touch on two or three in particular.

The fact is that Canada, heavily dependent on international trade, has embarked on new trading arrangements whatever the merits or demerits of those may be. They certainly do involve a challenge to Canadian exporters with which they need the assistance of their national government.

The need for adjustment assistance in the global marketplace and the freer trading environment of the world today must be obvious to all. I am not at all clear that it is as obvious to this government as it should have been. The government has not been as active as it could have been in helping to equip Canadians through collaboration with business and organized labour to benefit from the effects of trade liberalization.

Bill C-118 about which the minister just spoke does represent a step in the direction which we on this side of the House have certainly supported and sought for some time. I would only recall once more to the minister that the Macdonald royal commission in putting forward its recommendations to seek a freer trade environment matched that recommendation with an equally strong recommendation that the government work for the benefit of Canadians in reducing interprovincial trade barriers, in improving the standards of education and training in our country and in offering financial incentives to small businesses.

There were a dozen and one recommendations that much to our regret this government ignored when it brought forward its free trade legislation. Even today with the North American free trade legislation we see the continuing absence of effective adjustment assistance to match the commitment this government has made to continental or hemispheric freer trade.

I am pleased to say that the bill the minister introduced reflects a greater awareness of the need within Canada to cope with the impact of globalization of world markets and of investment. It equally does something to recognize the fact that Canada must be an attractive base for investment by companies in the export business seeking markets abroad.