

*Export Development Act***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-110, to amend the Export Development Act, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs; and Motions Nos. 3 and 5 (Mr. Blenkarn).

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Madam Speaker, it gives me some pleasure to be able to speak on this Bill this afternoon. As all Members know, since the opening of the doors for the fall part of the session of this Parliament we have been dealing with this Bill. We in the Progressive Conservative Party have stood against the Bill as written. This is the eighth day we have put forward speakers, which demonstrates to the House and to those who are concerned, as most Canadians are, that this is an extremely important Bill.

By and large our criticisms of the Bill have related to three general areas. These three general areas take as their first assumption the importance to this country of trade. We welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill. I cannot think of any theme which has occupied the minds of Progressive Conservative Members more often than the importance of trade to this country, of being able to be world competitive, being able to develop products and services which will stand us in good stead as a trading nation of the world. We have spent time on this Bill to ensure that our objections to it as written are clearly understood.

There are three reasons we are opposed to this Bill. Speaker after speaker has tried to indicate as clearly as possible to the Government, not often listening, why those three criticisms are important and ought to be considered by the Government when it makes its final speeches. First, we have dealt with the Bill itself. We have dealt with it in terms of the corporation. Speaker after speaker has pointed out that the request by the Government to double the capital authorization of this corporation is far beyond what is necessary, an actual doubling of the capital authorization. That is why the motion put forward by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn) indicates clearly recognition of the need for credit, the need for insurance, the need for the corporation to be able to assist in our exports, and allows for growth in that opportunity. It does not simply double without any further parliamentary control the capital authorization of the Export Development Corporation.

Also with respect to the corporation, a number of Members in this Party have pointed out, hoping that the Minister responsible and the Cabinet generally would pay attention, that there are criticisms, honest, clear and sincere criticisms by people in this country who use the services of the EDC, that it is wanting, particularly with new customers. Surely it is new customers that this country is interested in when it comes to export. It is with new customers in particular that we have had difficulty making sure that the corporation plays a role that is

efficient, that does not have undue delays and is open and accessible to people who want to export from this country to other countries of the world.

We know the importance of jobs and world competition which this country has to engage in over the next 20 years. That is why we have been unimpressed. When it comes to dealing with the corporation, the Government simply will not listen to fair and honest criticism made not only by us but by citizens, companies and corporations in this country which tries to use its services.

There has been a second area of criticism and concern, one which the Government would do well to pay closer attention to. That is the question of the role of Crown corporations in the country. This Bill raises once again a question which has always been an important one to the country, and that is the role of Crown corporations, particularly those Crown corporations that deal with economic development and economic growth.

● (1520)

There is no question that, certainly in the early and middle parts of this century, we have had a proud record of what Herschel Hardin, in a book he wrote some ten years ago, described as the importance of public enterprise to the future of Canada. It was a proud record, but if I could, Mr. Speaker, I would like clearly to explain why we take objection to the way Crown corporations have not been used by the Government but have been abused by the Government.

In 1962, 21 years ago, there were 28 Crown corporations in the country which controlled \$8.4 billion worth of assets. Twenty years later there were 300 Crown corporations employing 263,000 people with assets of \$74 billion and liabilities of \$63 billion. Those are enormous figures, Mr. Speaker. For example, the \$63 billion that is owed by the 300 Crown corporations in the country is equal to the total budgetary request of the Government for the last fiscal year.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, Crown corporations have assumed a role and an importance far beyond that which Canadians understood it to be. If I may, Mr. Speaker, let me indicate that the point I make is not a point that comes only from the Progressive Conservative Party. I direct your attention and the attention of the House, Mr. Speaker, to the Auditor General's Report of seven years ago to which the Government paid absolutely no attention. At that time, the Auditor General in his Report said:

In the majority of Crown corporations audited by the Auditor General, financial management and control is weak and ineffective. Moreover, co-ordination and guidance by central Government agencies of financial management and control practices in these Crown corporations—

I emphasize the following words.

—are virtually non-existent.

The Auditor General said that seven years ago.

These sentiments were echoed in the Lambert Report which said the same thing. What those reports basically said and what I say to you today, Mr. Speaker, is that the Government