

Mr. Speaker: The questions enumerated by the parliamentary secretary have been answered.

Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed, from Wednesday, April 26, consideration of the motion of Mr. Horner that Bill C-36, to amend the Export Development Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a brief intervention in this debate at this stage. As the House of Commons knows, there are a number of aspects of the legislation respecting the Export Development Corporation which are of very real concern to hon. members on this side of the House and to the people of Canada generally.

I personally have been alarmed at the performance of information officers of the Export Development Corporation, which very much borders on the partisan, in some of the attacks they have levelled against members in this House of Commons. I think this goes well beyond the proper bounds of the activities of information officers of a Crown corporation. It is a matter to which we will want to turn more attention later.

We are also very deeply concerned about the degree to which the Government of Canada has used the Export Development Corporation as a contributor to the economic hocus-pocus of this government by which it attempts to hide the degree of obligations and the degree of indebtedness which have been brought to Canada by the operations of the present government.

This bill would authorize the Export Development Corporation to raise \$26 billion. That is, in effect, a three-fold increase in its authorized accounts. That amount is not reflected in the national accounts of the government, and it is natural that we and others who are concerned about sound economic management in this country should ask questions as to why that very significant amount is omitted from the national accounts. The answer of the government is that it does not believe that loans by the EDC are direct obligations for the taxpayers of Canada. That position by the government is denied by publications of the EDC itself. That is very seriously misleading, because it allows the Government of Canada to claim that federal government spending and federal government obligations are much less than they are in fact, and I think that this govern-

Export Development Act

ment would find that it would be able to generate much more confidence in the Canadian business community, and among Canadians generally, if it were prepared to come clean and speak the truth about its full indebtedness.

The Government of Canada should stop trying to cook the books, as it has been doing with the Export Development Corporation.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: I want to deal with the specific direction of this legislation. This bill would raise the loan ceilings of the Export Development Corporation to \$12.5 billion from the present \$5.1 billion. It would raise the insurance ceiling to \$13.5 billion from \$3.5 billion.

We all know that the broad objective of the EDC is to encourage and promote Canadian exports. That role is carried out by the EDC by providing insurance and loans to finance capital projects throughout the world, and to tie those projects and that financing to the purchase of Canadian goods and materials. Of course, nobody can object or take exception to that basic purpose. Nobody would find fault with a Canadian government policy designed to promote Canadian exports, but when we look beneath the surface at what is going on in the EDC, and once we study its operations and look at the nature of the ventures in which it has become involved in the world, it becomes clear that the activities and the impact of the EDC go well beyond that general purpose of which all of us can approve.

There is in the activities of the EDC much more than that which appears on the surface. In many cases we are clearly realizing some short-term gains for Canada in terms of encouraging exports, but we are also—and this is the point to which attention has been drawn—gathering for this country some very serious long-term harm. What is happening, stripping away all of the detail—and I want to get to some of the detail later on—is that Canadian money is being used to build plants abroad which will compete with plants which are already operating in Canada. Canadian money is being used now to build plants abroad whose existence outside this country may very well prevent the development and construction of plants and the provision of jobs right here in Canada. In other words, we have a situation where we may be spending Canadian money now to create Canadian unemployment later, and that, sir, is a piece of foolishness which no sane, responsible parliament can approve or sustain.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: It is not at all surprising that this kind of proposed legislation comes from this government because, if this government is anything, it is a short-term government. In the name of long-term economic planning this government brought in a six-month budget. With its eye on trying to alleviate unemployment, which grows most acute in October and November, this government introduced a sales tax cut which will end when unemployment becomes most acute. This government is committed to the short-term, and it is absolutely