

Federal Business Development Bank Act

● (1520)

I do not complain about that. As I recollect, his question was: what status did Mr. Mantha have with respect to a CIDA project. He is not directly employed by CIDA. He is employed by a contractor in a CIDA project. As I understand it, prior to his going to Zaire the clearance had been given to him as a qualified person. But since he has returned, he is not on the project.

Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain): That was half an answer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH CORPORATION

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-14, to incorporate the Federal Business Development Bank, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. Dick) has on the order paper an amendment at this stage of the bill pertaining to the definition clause. I am sure the hon. member is aware of the fact that the Chair has some very grave reservations about the procedural regularity of the amendment. However, in view of the fact that the amendment would appear to add a totally new clause to the definition section, which in turn would add a totally new principle or concept to the application of the bill as a whole and therefore would offend one or two basic rules pertinent to amendments at this stage, I would not want to make a final ruling without giving the hon. member an opportunity to defend his amendment from a procedural point of view.

It seems to me that an amendment which adds to the definition clause of a bill a definition which was not contemplated in the original drafting of the bill, thereby seeking not simply to clarify the definition section but to limit the application of the bill to the kind of activity that is defined by the proposed amendment, would go not only beyond the scope of the clause under consideration but would probably be outside the principle and scope of the bill itself. Under those circumstances, I have grave reservations about the amendment, but I will be pleased to hear from any hon. member who wishes to contribute to the procedural point before we continue.

Mr. Paul Dick (Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I have not prepared myself to speak to the amendment which I tabled some three weeks ago before the bill went to committee, and it had been tabled for over two weeks in the House. The first suggestion that there is a procedural problem with respect to it was made thirty seconds ago by Your Honour. I had no notification from the Clerk. This

[Mr. MacEachen.]

leaves me in the difficult position of trying to bring forward precedents in defending the amendment.

However, I respectfully submit that a bill which defines a business enterprise and provides that money will be lent to business enterprises in Canada restricts, to a certain degree, what a business enterprise is. Therefore, the amendment is in no way outside the scope and intent of the bill. This is a very wide bill which sets up a new bank. Surely, in setting up a new bank we may in some way try to influence the direction the bank will take. The evidence in the committee was that 1 per cent or 2 per cent of the bank's funds might be affected by this amendment, so it can hardly be suggested that this amendment goes too far in restricting the bill or its scope.

This amendment would not affect taxes or government expenditures. It is merely deals with the definition of a business enterprise to which the bank may lend funds. Surely members of the House of Commons have the obligation and the right to express their views on a matter of this nature. I would point out that I find myself in a difficult position in having to defend the amendment after it has been in circulation both in the committee and the House for five weeks, everybody having accepted it and debated it as well as voting on it in the committee. Only a few minutes ago I learned, for the first time, that the amendment was challenged and now I have to be an instant expert on the matter. I regret that I cannot be an instant expert, and I hope we will be allowed to debate the substance of the amendment.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It may be suggested that we reserve consideration of this amendment and proceed to the consideration of two others that will be put before us, if the hon. member wants time to prepare himself to defend the procedural aspects of his proposed amendment.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, in case I am not in the chamber at the time of the debate on this amendment, may I point out to the Chair that if Your Honour examines the recommendation—which of course is not binding by itself—it is written in very wide and vague terms and I suggest there is nothing in the recommendation which would inhibit the hon. member in bringing forward his amendment. I have not had time to review the bill, but I studied it when it was before the House for second reading. I would call the attention of the Chair to clause 4 of the bill which deals with the objects of the corporation. It reads:

The objects of the corporation are to promote and assist in the establishment and development of business enterprises in Canada—

Under the interpretation section of any statute the words "business enterprises in Canada" would receive the widest possible latitude and interpretation. The hon. member has sought, by his amendment, to give some meaning to that term. It lies within the competence of the government to interpret the term "business enterprises in Canada". Perhaps the government, for reasons best known to itself, said: We will not interpret "business enterprises in Canada"; we will leave that interpretation to the minister, to the courts, or to some vague, indefinite group of people.

However, when you have a statute which presumably is of a remedial nature—we must assume that every statute