

Government Orders

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I would like to split my time with the hon. member for Laval West. I will confine my remarks to 10 minutes and watch the clock very closely. It is only for that reason that I will resist the temptation to respond to the remarks of the previous speaker. I find them absolutely fantastical, if that is a word. I do not know where those trade figures came from but they did not come from a very reliable source. They are an extraordinary set of statistics I must say.

Mr. Althouse: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The not very reliable source that the member is speaking of is Statistics Canada catalogue 67-001, table 3. He can look it up. It is a very reliable source.

Mr. McCreath: Mr. Speaker, I will look forward to the NAFTA debate. Since my hon. friend did not actually speak to the bill that is before the House I will be pleased to engage in a discussion further when we speak on NAFTA. That is of course if his colleagues will allow the House to actually debate the NAFTA and not just play games with parliamentary procedure.

On the other hand I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak briefly on Bill C-118. This is legislation to amend the Export Development Act and to make the Export Development Corporation the kind of catalyst Canadian exporters need to compete in the global marketplace.

Mr. MacWilliam: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the member has impugned the motives of me and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party in terms of the impending debate on NAFTA.

I just wanted to point out that should he and his colleagues on the government side decide to provide ample opportunity for debate on NAFTA then we will do everything in our power to ensure that debate is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Debate right now.

Mr. McCreath: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend and people of Canada had an opportunity to draw their own conclusions and I am sure they will.

Speaking again of this very excellent piece of legislation, Bill C-118, I want to point out that this legislation will not only enhance the prospects for Canadian importers but it will indeed be highly beneficial to all Canadians.

When he spoke to introduce the bill the Minister for International Trade made reference to what he referred to as the three Cs: customers, competitors and competitiveness.

The Export Development Corporation's customers are demanding a more complete set of risk-management services. Many of our exporters' competitors are already receiving risk-management services that EDC has difficulty offering under the wording of the current act.

Finally, the degree and nature of international competitiveness has in fact changed. There is I suppose a fourth C. We will remember that the minister emphasized on several occasions how important exports are to both the number and quality of jobs we will be creating in Canada during the next decade.

• (1630)

The fourth C quite simply stands for Canadians. This government more than any government in Canada's history has seen how important success in the international marketplace is to maintaining the standard of living that Canadians have known, the quality of jobs that Canadians have had access to and the lifestyle that Canadians have worked so hard to build up over a century and a quarter as a country.

Canadians cannot continue to prosper the way we have prospered as a nation if we do not rise to new international challenges. This bill is part of a concerted initiative spearheaded by this government to assure that Canadians can meet those new challenges.

The government could have taken the politically easy route of pretending that Canadians would not be hurt if we tried to ignore what is going on in the world today and tried to create a kind of fantasy environment with great, huge walls around us. Frankly, we would not do that. It would not be right to try to fool Canadians into thinking that everything would be just fine if we tried to hide our little heads in little holes in the ground and pretended that nothing was happening in the world.

This government has not chosen to meet the challenge of the international marketplace because we enjoy the adventure of selling beyond our borders. We have done it quite simply because we knew that the Canadian economy would wither if we tried to hide and tried to produce only for our own marketplace. A quarter of the jobs in this country today in the productive sector are indeed directly related to export.