

stayed away. But the President of the Export Development Corporation performed true to form, and it was an embarrassment to the minister and to government members. He passed off many questions with a wave of his hand. He joked and laughed and made a farce of the first committee meeting at which he appeared.

However, we pass this bill along today despite the performance of the president, in spite of the fact that he was evasive—in the view of many of the committee members he might as well have stayed in his office.

We were concerned at the lack of facilities offered to small business, small exporters. As is often the case in this life, we can only determine values by comparison. We had to compare the operations of the EDC with those of the EXIM Bank in the United States. We related to the committee details of the assistance which that organization had made available to small exporters. We discussed this matter in the committee in the twenty-ninth parliament.

We were told by the president and by the Canadian Exporters Association representatives that it was too costly to handle sales under a million dollars—it involved too much detail. Recently, we pressed this matter again at meetings of the standing committee, and we found to our surprise that by a resolution of the board of directors of EDC it had been decided to finance sales of less than a million dollars. We learned this, not through the EDC but from a news story in a Vancouver newspaper following a letter which the EDC had sent to the minister of industry in British Columbia.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) did not put out a news release, nor did the EDC have the courtesy to send this information to the members of the standing committee. We learned about it in consequence of a news release by the minister of industry in the B.C. legislature, and that is how the story appeared in the newspaper. This, in itself, illustrates the complete disregard the President of the Export Development Corporation has for parliament and, I would say, probably for the minister as well. He is retiring. I wish him well, but I am glad to see him go. That is not a very charitable thing to say, especially at this time of the year, but I do not feel very charitable today.

I will wager, Mr. Speaker, that there is hardly a small business in Canada—I am thinking of a business with export potential—which is aware of the change the EDC has made in its financing policy. During the clause by clause discussion of the bill we submitted amendments in an endeavour to get this policy of financing export sales amounting to less than a million dollars placed into the statute.

We also tried to ensure that export warranties and guarantees would be available to Canadian chartered banks and other financial institutions, both inside and outside Canada, wishing to engage in the financing of small Canadian exporters. What we heard from the president of the EDC was a lot of gibberish, a lot of double talk, a lot of simple nonsense. We did, however, get a commitment from the minister that his officials would develop a program for small Canadian exporters and extend facilities to institutions other than EDC wishing to participate in export financing. I commend the minister for this initiative. I believe him to be a man of his word. I trust

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that the minister will carry forward with his promise, as I am sure he will.

● (1510)

We are concerned about the softening of export markets. We all know the minister has some difficult problems to sort out in this regard. The economics of the western world are facing very severe problems today, and I do not for a moment gloss over them lightly, and point a finger at the minister, or accuse him of any lack of initiative. By and large I think he does a pretty good job.

I should also like to see the whole program of the EDC redeveloped. I was very impressed with the redirection given the Industrial Development Bank through the introduction of the new legislation setting up the Federal Business Development Bank. I hope this becomes some sort of framework which the minister will use along with the EDC; some sort of redirection and initiative can be taken in this regard. The concerns we have about the secretive way in which the EDC operates, and the difficulty we have getting information should be removed so that the business community of Canada in general will benefit from the operations of this corporation.

For example, at a committee meeting I asked the President of the Export Development Corporation about loans made to OPEC nations, and he admitted we had made such loans, some of which he thought were listed in these reports. He even referred me to the page of the report. After the committee rose the president came over to me and flashed under my eyes one of the reports which obviously the minister had asked him for concerning the OPEC nations, a report several inches thick. I asked him whether he would leave it with me but he said he was sorry, he could not do that. All I got from him was that there were outstanding loans to OPEC nations in the sum of \$258 million.

As hon. members know, these are nations that at the present time hold the economies of the western world in their hands. Therefore I hope the minister will take a good look at our export financing of OPEC nations. While we do not want to put any restrictions on our exporters, we have to have points of leverage, and this is a lever we can use.

In addition, I should like to see a complete overhaul of EDC policy. It should have new guidelines in keeping with industrial strategy. Our whole trading position has to be rethought and redirected with a national purpose behind it. Our trading position in the world today hangs in the balance. I think we are in for some pretty difficult times. If the present trend continues we will have something in the order of a \$2 billion deficit for the current year. I hope I am wrong, but if the figures at our disposal are correct and the downward slide continues, that is the deficit we will be facing.

We all know the government's position regarding phasing out oil exports. This will have a tremendous effect on our balance of payments, and automatically will affect future direction of our exports. The dollar volume will have to be picked up by other sectors of our economy.

I believe a Crown corporation such as the EDC, which has at its disposal something in the order of \$5 billion, needs an overhaul. It needs new direction and more minis-