

Export Development Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville rises on a point of order.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to interrupt but the Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) made a very important point about the appointment of provincial civil servants. I read the motion carefully and I think he is in error. I wonder if he would respond to a question on that point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): That is a rather unusual procedure and could only be done with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent to allow the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville to put a question?

Of course, the Hon. Member who has the floor must agree to receive a question. Is that agreeable?

Mr. Thacker: Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nystrom: The Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills mentioned that someone who is a provincial civil servant could be appointed to the EDC board according to the amendment of the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn). I have read the proposed amendment very carefully. Clause 4(3) reads as follows:

The balance of the Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Governor-in-Council and shall be persons not regularly employed in the public service of Canada either directly or indirectly or in the public service of any province in Canada—

Clause 4(2) reads:

Three Directors of the Corporations shall be appointed by the Governor-in-Council from among persons employed in the public service of Canada—

I wonder whether the Hon. Member could confirm that under the motion presented by the Hon. Member for Mississauga South there could not be an appointment made from the public service of any Province to one of the 14 directorships?

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, nowhere in my comments did I say that a member of the public service in a Province could be appointed. I agree that this could not take place. I was dealing with Crown corporations, anticipating those Crown corporations in Saskatchewan and Alberta that deal with trade. It will be noted that Clause 4(3) provides that “persons not regularly employed in the public service of Canada either directly or indirectly” are prohibited. I think Crown corporations would therefore be included because of the word “indirectly”. With respect to the Provinces the prohibition is restricted only to the public service of any Province.

Mr. Nystrom: Read Subclause (3).

Mr. Thacker: Subclause (3) reads:

The balance of the Board of Directors shall be appointed by the Governor-in-Council and shall be persons not regularly employed in the public service of Canada either directly or indirectly or in the public service of any province in Canada—

I think the word “indirectly” is restricted to the Public Service of Canada and its Crown corporations. With respect to the Provinces, the other people could be brought in. That is the way I read it. Perhaps after my friend has had some time to

look into the matter, he would agree. Otherwise this would have read “or in the public service of any Province either directly or indirectly”.

I believe the Minister should respond to the criticisms of the Economic Council of Canada. We got the impression from parts of private industry that once the EDC got going, particularly now that it will have more and more funding, and as the bureaucracy grows, it will have the effect of squeezing out private lenders. It seems to me we should be trying to emphasize private lending and saving the resources of the EDC for more of a guarantee function.

What assurances can the Minister give us on that point? I think the board of directors and the executive officers would welcome it if the Minister could tell us what the Government policy will be.

I shall rise to speak on subsequent motions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, this is the second day of the resumption of Parliament after the summer recess. One thing that I discovered in my constituency during the course of the summer, and I presume other Hon. Members did as well, is that whatever the people might feel about the Government of Canada and that there ought to be a change, many fear that the people at large do not have control of things because there is a non-elected Government that has too much influence in the running of the country.

The amendment before us suggests that the number of people from the private sector who serve as directors of this Crown corporation should be increased and the number from the Public Service decreased. I submit that this is in harmony with the feelings of the people of Canada at the present time.

The people feel that a civil servant from any department is a servant of the Minister—in effect, is a member of the Minister's staff. Then why do we have Crown corporations? We have them because they will be independent from the Minister. Why would we have an agency which in its fundamental philosophy is to be independent from the Minister if its board of directors are, in essence, to be the persons who advise the Minister? You really have a contradiction of philosophy if you set something apart from the ministry while at the same time you have persons who are a part of the ministry advising that which you set apart. Therefore, in the cold logic of what we are attempting to do in setting apart an agency from a Minister in order to remove whatever governmental and political influences there might be, it is only natural and just that we also set it completely apart by giving autonomy to that Crown corporation by having its board of directors appointed purely from outside government. The amendment, then, which is one which would reduce the number of public servants who can sit as directors, also makes sense because I believe there is a question of public trust and confidence. The majority of Canadians know that the great hope for our country is going to be an expanded economy. They also know that is going to come when the best talent that we can discover is energized to do the best job for Canadians.