

Trade Policies

On many occasions I have heard it said that there is no one place that an exporter who has a broad interest in the export market can go for a proper hearing. As a result, a lot of his time is spent talking to different government departments or even parts of departments. If we can get this interdepartmental co-ordinating group established, we feel it will satisfy that need very quickly. It will be very important in co-ordinating policy and action in order to fulfil our export needs.

In these two ways we feel we can establish a strong focal point within government and the industrial sector to meet the needs of the export community. The key consideration in all of this is that we are looking to the private sector to carry the ball. The private sector must provide the organizations that will seek business and be successful in getting it. Governments can support but they cannot go out and do the job.

The next area that I should like to discuss is the Export Development Corporation. As I have said before, we live in a very, very competitive world. Order industrialized countries have experienced a falling-off of economic growth and are now looking to the export market to assist in this economic development. They have become very competitive and are providing financial support to different projects. Canadian companies or consortia have found it very difficult to compete as a result.

We want to make the Export Development Corporation a more effective and competitive organization than it is today. It will have to be co-ordinated very closely with other parts of government. I am pleased to tell the House today that CIDA is being very open in the approach it wishes to take in co-ordinating the provision of aid with other support efforts that this government will be making.

There is under active study right now some different approaches to the establishment of rates by the Export Development Corporation and other terms and conditions for the moneys they would lend in support of our export activities. We are seeking ways to meet the concessional financing which has been made available to some of our competitors. This is a very complex area and is closely intertwined with our aid policy. It must, therefore, be closely co-ordinated with the development of our aid policy.

We feel, however, that it is something that must be done in the short run as well as in the medium and longer term. We are looking at how we can make export trade available to a greater extent in support of small business export efforts. I believe this will be an area about which we will be coming forth with specific policies.

● (1420)

Let me discuss the question of privatization. The word "privatization" has been used in a very broad sense as it relates to the change in operations that we are considering for a number of companies that are now wholly-owned by the government. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Stevens) stated briefly last week, and I would like to state now, that at no time have we been considering the sale of the shares of the Export Development Corporation to the private sector. That is not the direction this government is taking. What we

[Mr. Wilson.]

feel we should be doing is involving to a greater extent resources and skills in the broad range of contacts that the private sector has and then utilize those skills in support of our export efforts.

The chartered banks will be very important participants in this effort. I have had discussions with a number of officials of the chartered banks, as have representatives of the Export Development Corporation, and we propose to follow through on those shortly. The Export Development Corporation must be flexible, aggressive, innovative and a very efficient organization if we are to succeed in the world that we are in today. It is and always will be a critical component of our export efforts. We must strengthen and give our full support to it so that it can fulfil its responsibilities.

Knowing a number of officers and employees of the Export Development Corporation, I am very confident that they have the skills and the innovative knowledge to be able to go out and do the job required of them so that the Export Development Corporation will continue to be a very important part of our export effort.

I have made reference to the Hatch report. This is a private sector study group which has been put together to study the export promotion efforts of the government. We have had initial discussions with the group as to the content of their report. I am pleased to tell the House today that the direction in which they are going is quite consistent with the direction I believe the government should be going in support of our export activities. I expect the report will be available some time in mid-December and I hope we will be able to respond positively and at an early date to the proposals which they will be putting forward.

I turn now to the medium and longer-term strategy that we should be following in Canada. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Miss MacDonald) will be laying a paper before a parliamentary committee on our foreign aid policy for the 1980s. An integral part of foreign policy must be our foreign trade policy. There will be a number of important questions posed in that paper for discussion by the parliamentary committee. This will be a very important discussion paper outlining our position vis-à-vis the rest of the world, as well as being able to see this government can support the direction of our trade policy in the 1980s.

Let me comment briefly on a couple of aspects of that policy. Canada is a medium-sized power in the world today. It is highly respected in many ways by many countries. It has a link to the Third World countries, those countries which have reached a reasonably advanced state of development but are not at the stage of development of the major industrialized countries in the world. We see that these countries will be very important markets for Canada in the future. We want to see how we can develop our broader foreign policy so that we can reinforce the good relations and high regard these countries have for Canada. We can see in what way this could lead to expanding our trade with those countries.

Canada is a very blessed country in the capacity that it has to produce natural resources, whether those resources are food,