

Parliament to have its say when their money is being spent and we mentioned examples including Canadair without challenging the desire of any Government that is supportive of its industry to promote companies like Canadair and the products it has to offer on the world market. But to go so far as to allow a company like Canadair to misrepresent its financial situation in Cabinet and to let it get away with padding their order books . . . I think the Minister of National Defence, like all those other Hon. Members, would be well advised, if they have the courage to do so, to demand that this company at least come clean before a Government that has made it possible for them to make a number of extraordinary accomplishments in the aerospace field. However, if we respect our commitments to our constituents, we cannot allow our corporations to deceive the Government in order to obtain subsidies, and thus cause the public to raise a number of questions for which there is every justification but no answer.

That is why, in the interests of all Canadians, we are emphasizing the basic principle that Parliament must retain control over the expenditure of public funds. This should be abundantly clear to Canadians watching us today, Mr. Speaker. But why, and especially in recent times, are Hon. Members opposite who, like me, are not in Cabinet, leaving it up to the ministers to decide whether or not to give Government support to this or that Crown corporation? Those Hon. Members, like myself, are entirely aware of the increased deficits of Crown corporations. But these corporations do not have to ask Parliament for appropriations.

Mr. Speaker, we know perfectly well that under any Government, representatives, directors and chairmen of corporations are appointed by Cabinet. The chairman of Canadair or Air Canada is not appointed by the Member for some obscure riding but by Cabinet. We all know that. As a result, these people have no obligation to ask for appropriations and have them approved by Parliament. This institution should have responsibility for the expenditure of public funds—that is what Canadians want to know and what they deserve to know. This Government could not care less how public monies are spent by these Crown corporations.

This lack of control on the part of the Government is unacceptable and reflects—I challenge anyone to say otherwise—irresponsibility on the part of a Government that professes to respect the individual. That is the battle we are fighting in the House, Mr. Speaker, and we are being criticized because we insist and demand that Parliament control the expenditures of these corporations. Is this not perfectly legitimate? Mr. Speaker, I have always felt that the expenditures, the massive loans these corporations must contract and which are endorsed by the Government, are just a blank cheque, and they are under no obligation to get prior approval from the House, whose Members are accountable to the people. That is precisely the question which we are raising today, which we raised yesterday and which we will continue to raise as long as necessary

Export Development Act

because, deep in our conscience anyway, we feel the obligation to ensure that this wanton spending of public funds be stopped, Mr. Speaker. We simply have to insist that this Government refrain from taking decisions in the inner sanctum of Cabinet and from disregarding altogether the opinion of those who have been elected to defend the views and the interests of the population.

That, Mr. Speaker, is why we are asking today to this Parliament, to this House and to Hon. Members who perhaps fail to grasp the significance of our claims that the House be given control over Government spending, because of course the Government is spending the money collected from Canadian taxpayers. With respect to the powers of Crown corporations, we have seen too many examples in recent years—particularly the deficits of Crown corporations and those of the Government—not to seek to regain control by moving amendments to this Bill. Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we are all in favour of unlimited development, but we insist that the corporations responsible for such development be held accountable to the elected representatives.

I happen to think that it is a legitimate principle and that we have to uphold it in the House. It is a debate and an objective which we must pursue in the best interests of the Canadian people. Contrary to the views expressed earlier by the Minister of National Defence who said that we could not care less about Canadian technology and industrial growth, God knows they have no lesson to teach us when it comes to job creation. It is all very well to talk about creating temporary employment, but what Canadians want are permanent jobs! They also demand responsible management, which they have not had these last few years.

In our amendments and our arguments, we are asking and demanding that the Government give Parliament some control over the spending of the taxpayers' money. We ask, and justifiably so, that Canadians be protected, and not by the Government but by the House of Commons, which indeed played such a role a long time ago and should keep on doing so. However, the Government is trying to grab more and more power as we have seen in other areas, but in this case, if we have anything to do about it, Parliament will not lose its control over the expenditure of public funds. Mr. Speaker, these are the comments that I wanted to make and felt I had to make in the interests of Canada and the future of Canadian industry.

● (1600)

[English]

Mr. Jim Peterson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to make a few remarks in the House concerning the Export Development Corporation. I believe that it would be reasonable for all Members of the House to consider the EDC within the context of what we as Canadians want to achieve