

Export Development Act

We have roadways of over 5,000 miles from sea to sea, highways spread out across the 49th parallel and adjacent to it, thousands of mile, yet we find that road transport equipment has a deficit on imports of \$1,036,000,000. In aircraft and parts equipment we managed to create a surplus of \$203 million; in other vehicles, \$42 million deficit.

We have Northern Telecom trying to expand their telecommunications industry, trying to create more jobs, but being throttled by this government—and my goodness we have a classic example right here with the microphones on our desks that are imported from Austria. We have imports to the tune of \$1,173,000,000 in communications equipment. In heating, air conditioning, and refrigeration equipment, we have a deficit of \$198 million; domestic and commercial appliances, \$946 million; tools, \$196 million; office machinery, \$384 million. My goodness, you would think that the bureaucracy here in Ottawa could establish its own industry to look after office machinery that is used in bureaucracy alone. Medical, pharmaceutical supplies have a deficit of \$405 million, with photographic goods and equipment at \$406 million. This adds up to \$7,582 million. What was the response of Industry, Trade and Commerce to these figures?

● (1552)

The assistant deputy minister in charge of industrial policy and planning has stated that he does not believe anybody could put together a strategy which will last for more than 30 days. In fact he says debate about an industrial strategy is sterile and should be discontinued. If that is the case, why did the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce bother bringing in this bill? We reject that proposal by the assistant deputy minister completely. Any country with 22 million people that imports \$24.4 billion in high technology products should not engage in a debate, but should get on with the job of eating into that multibillion dollar market by creating jobs and profits right here in Canada. No wonder there are concerns from this side about this new bill for the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Yesterday in a speech made by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni, either in a blush of honesty or a flash of brilliance, I do not know which, he said that we are like lambs in the international market. Certainly Canadians and members of the opposition know that we have been fleeced, if that is what the member is implying. Perhaps he thinks that Canadians will follow this government like lambs at the next election. I think he may find that the lambs will turn into lions, and that we feed heartily on grits. I did not expect the member to be so thoroughly honest when he made that reference.

In reviewing his speech, probably what concerns me the most was the fact that only once during the period he spoke did he make any reference to any western Canadian industry. That was a one-liner about shareholders of MacMillan Bloedel. It had no bearing on the thrust and the context of the debate on the bill before us. I would suggest that if the hon. member examines the circumstances in the riding of Comox-Alberni, as I have examined the circumstances for the riding

[Mr. Brisco.]

of Kootenay West, and as other western members have examined the circumstances for their particular ridings, would find that the record of co-operation and the degree of interest demonstrated by the EDC are negligible. It is so much simpler to do business here in Ontario and Quebec, and to hell with the west.

Just to illustrate, the Canadian Export Development Corporation recently provided assistance to Treco Limited, an eastern supplier of prefab housing. I say, look it up in your books. They landed a nice contract of \$93 million with Algeria. Nobody in British Columbia was advised that the contract was open. Nobody had the opportunity in British Columbia to bid on that. Nobody in the lumber industry, which was depressed at that time, had an opportunity to know that they could bid on that. I suggest that the officials from the Export Development Corporation add the word "co-operation" after their title and think in terms of talking to the British Columbia Development Corporation. I suggest that these officials have an opportunity to find out from the BCDC how unimpressed they are with the measure of co-operation from the Export Development Corporation.

I know that the Corporation is sensitive; its people do not like criticism. As a matter of fact I took the liberty of mentioning them, in passing reference, in a parliamentary news column. I noticed they were sensitive to that because they responded by a letter to the editor. The Export Development Corporation's director of communications, Mr. John M. Bowles, sent a letter to the editor of the Arrow Lake News and he quoted a number of facts. He said that EDC does not cost the Canadian taxpayer a cent. What he means is it does not cost the taxpayer a cent, it costs the taxpayers billions of dollars! That is what he really means. If the man had the courage of his convictions and if he were really concerned, perhaps he might have followed it up with a letter to me instead of conducting a paper war with the member of parliament for Kootenay West through the media of the editorial columns of a newspaper. That is the only time I have ever heard from Mr. Bowles.

It is significant to note that throughout the speech made by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni, who is a parliamentary secretary for this government, that there was not a single reference to the activities and the degree of support that this Corporation gives to western Canada. I want to put on the record now that British Columbia is thoroughly fed up, as is western Canada, with the failure of the EDC to address itself to anything else but centralized concerns and centralized business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I believe the Minister of State (Small Business) has indicated that he wants to speak on behalf of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. If he does, I would suggest he will close the debate. Does the Minister of State for Small Business have unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.