

What the Export Development Corporation has done to help our export trade is appreciated, and all parties will probably agree to increase the funding, although we cannot be sure of that. The corporation must ask itself some serious questions about its function as a development corporation, however, and its relationship to the manufacturing sector.

Winston Churchill is supposed to have said that democracy is the worst form of government until you compare it to everything else. One does not have to sit in this House very long to realize that one of the most disheartening things encountered is the difficulty in getting information. Whether I am re-elected or not by the people I respect, admire, and love, I want to tell members on the other side, or whoever comes to power in this country, that we must have greater freedom of information. We are a democracy, not an Iron Curtain country. We know that some things cannot be disclosed because of the provisions of the Official Secrets Act.

Even in the question period, why should we have a rule that allows a minister to refuse to answer an opposition question? That is undemocratic. We can understand a poor answer, as it is spontaneous, but there is no case for a refusal to answer, as sometimes happens in very important circumstances.

I want to return to my topic, Mr. Speaker, and say to officials of the Export Development Corporation in the gallery, and to the minister in charge of the corporation, who is not here today for whatever reason, that we must find a way to make our institutions more open. We must make this real in fact, not just rhetoric. This applies to the corporation we are now discussing.

In our time in this House we come to have respect for individuals on all sides, regardless of political affiliation, and I have that respect for the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). I have come to the conclusion that one of the most important contributions we can make to parliament is to ensure there is more openness about all our institutions. This will be embarrassing to a government at times, of course. We have before us the lesson of the United States. I have a very high regard for the humility of that nation despite apparent stupidities. We laugh at them at times and we make fun of their presidents sometimes. But when the time came their elected officials told their people. They get much more information in that country from their parliamentarians and from their government than we do here in Canada. I cite that as an example.

● (1622)

I think the Export Development Corporation is in difficulty, partly because under the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Commerce, not just under this particular minister, but all ministers of industry, trade and commerce, parliamentarians have not been told enough about things they should know. If we continue to make light of parliament, there will come a day when provincial and federal entities in special meetings will become the dominant institution. But at this time as a parliament we do not have too good an image. We can dispel our present image. There are all kinds of hard working people

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here. In general we should take the secrecy out of things. This would be relatively easy to do in most cases, although in certain instances discretion is needed, and certainly the Export Development Corporation falls into this category.

I see Mr. Speaker rubbing his knees. I know over the last four years, whenever he is in the chair and when he does that, he is getting a little tired. However, I ask him to bear with me on this point.

I want to repeat that the Export Development Corporation in its primary objective, as I have described it and as it appeared to me, has done a great job. There are many questions now about where it has gone in recent years and where it intends to go. We must get that Corporation to join with all of the institutions in Canada, even at this late date in our history and despite the economic, social, psychological, and political difficulties, and build a solid economic structure in this country. This should include a large, decisive, manufacturing sector otherwise we could go down the drain much faster than we realize.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak on Bill C-36 now before us. However, I must first of all deplore the fact that the government is again doing all it can to have us adopt at full speed such an important piece of financial legislation. To begin with, it seems to me that when such a legislation is put before us to triple the Export Development Corporation's support to Canadian business, as elected representatives we are entitled to ask for guarantees regarding the allocation and management of these funds.

I know that most of us think that our unemployment rate is quite unacceptable and that it is mostly the result of competition from foreign countries and of our rather weak position in an increasing number of industries. I recognize that the Export Development Corporation needs fresh funds which will create new jobs in industries where we are already competitive. The corporation should obviously be able to ensure the steady volume of exports we need to restore our balance of payments.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the corporation could not only promote the continuous expansion of a number of industries such as farm and industrial machinery plants, but also earmark some of these new funds—which Parliament is probably going to authorize—for the development of some sectors where Canada is presently experiencing a significant decline and which might reverse the trend if new markets were found. I am thinking particularly of mining and textile industries. So the government is prepared to increase the maximum guarantees of the corporation from \$2.5 billion to \$10 billion and its authorized capital from \$400 million to \$1 billion. If not for electoral reasons, why does the government want to hand out millions under our nose without giving us the opportunity of at least suggesting that these funds be put to better use than has ever been the case in the past?