

Export Development Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the Parliamentary Secretary speaks again it will have to be by unanimous consent of the House. Is there such unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Bruce Howard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, there have been many and varied contributions to the debate today. I regret that many of the comments which have been made, however valuable, have not pertained specifically to the bill before us. Nevertheless, I regard them with great interest. They have been concerned with the general subject of trade and Canadian trade policies and are of use to the government as they will be of use to the committee when it studies this bill in detail.

I should like to deal specifically with a number of observations which have been made. I found some of them very strange. We have found ourselves, as Canadians, with an unprecedented trade surplus, with rapidly expanding international trade, and yet at a time like this we have been beating our breasts and calling down upon the Lord to ask him how such a strange thing came about that we should be so successful. I suppose this is typically Canadian and that we all share this trait. We are selling our goods all over the world in unprecedented quantities and we say: There must be something wrong. The government must be making a mistake. Businessmen in Canada cannot be doing the right thing; we are successful. As I say, I suppose this is typically Canadian, but I confess I found some of the comments today surprising.

No doubt there are difficulties ahead of us. It is not just clear sailing and it would be wise for us to pay attention to what may lie before us. It has been pointed out that the undoubted entry of the United Kingdom into the European Common Market will cause us considerable difficulty; we shall have to find markets to compensate for the markets we shall lose when the United Kingdom makes this change. This is a situation we shall have to face honestly. But along with the entry of the United Kingdom into the Common Market there are considerable opportunities for us. This is a rapidly expanding market which is prepared to consume increasingly large quantities of not only our raw materials but our manufactured goods. It is more important for us to concentrate on the opportunities open to us than upon the difficulties. If we do, we shall come out all right.

Another of the pessimistic views expressed here this afternoon concerned the DISC program which has been proposed in the United States. It was pointed out by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) a few moments ago that this proposal had not been passed by the United States Congress, that it had been dropped. Perhaps it will be revived and brought before Congress again, but let us cross that bridge when we come to it. Let us enter, well prepared, upon any negotiations which may be conducted, but I believe we should not cry too much before we are hurt.

Mr. Saltsman: May I ask the Parliamentary Secretary a question?

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member rising on a point of order?

Mr. Saltsman: I should like to direct a question to the Parliamentary Secretary, since he is giving his views on how successful we have been. I should like to ask him whether he thinks the highest rate of unemployment in the western world, and the slowest growth rate, is cause for congratulation.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): I did point out, Mr. Speaker, that we are not without problems in Canada. What I said was that we have been extremely successful in the matter of world trade, and I specifically made that point. I suggest that having been successful in this area, we should not cry about our success but be happy with it.

A point made by the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton) this afternoon concerned our investments in lesser developed countries than Canada. He suggested this was some kind of economic imperialism that we should fear and shy away from; that the instrument before the House made it easier for Canadian businessmen to take part in this economic imperialism and indeed encouraged them to do so. I do not share that view, and I know my view is shared by many other people who are specialists in the field of external aid. I also know that all the official aid that we could ever give would never solve the problem of developing economies in countries that need such help. Unless we can encourage our businessmen to invest, to create employment and thus improve the economies of these countries, even with all the official aid that we could give to them these countries could never hope to bring themselves above the poverty level. The countries themselves recognize this and welcome and encourage the establishment of Canadian industry within their borders.

Perhaps we have to be careful of the terms under which industry goes into foreign countries, just as we have to be concerned about the terms on which foreign industry enters Canada, though that is a very different question. I think our industries must be prepared to live by the laws of the countries in which they do business. They must be prepared to adapt to local conditions and be good corporate citizens of those countries. They must be prepared to recognize that the welfare of the people in those countries must be considered. But as I say, it is the terms on which they operate that are important, not the fact that they are there.

The hon. member for Regina East also raised the question of foreign ownership of industries that are eligible for assistance by the Export Development Corporation. He asked what attitude the corporation took toward foreign-owned export companies, and he seemed to express concern that assistance might be given to these companies which could be inimical to the national interests of Canada. Let me assure the hon. member for Regina East and other hon. members who might be concerned with this point that the operations of the Export