

Export Credits Insurance Act

Mr. McIlraith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You will have noticed I have not digressed into a discussion on the sale of the wheat. I have confined my remarks to the guaranteeing of the exports payment. That transaction was very, very large. At least I believe it was very large but we are not told of the extent of the guarantee. From the public information given, we are led to assume it was very large and if I am right in my argument that it should have been done under this act the government conceivably might have had to come back earlier for this amendment in order to have the funds available.

In any event, I want to draw from the argument that the government has an obligation on this bill to explain why that transaction, which appears of a nature that it must come under this act, was not brought under it. If there is no explanation, of course they must stand condemned for not bringing it under the act. If there is in fact some other authority to permit them to guarantee export payment, then I must at once protest that this bill is not wide enough in that it does not make it clear, as has been assumed all these years that the Export Credits Insurance Act is the only legislation providing for government insurance or guarantees for export credit.

I want to press that point because, while perhaps I am guilty of not having made it sufficiently clear at the earlier stage, unclear as my remarks have been, the minister's reply on that point was very close to being nonexistent; it certainly did not really deal with the point at all. It is a point that I think must be dealt with if his legislation—which, as I have indicated, is good legislation—is to maintain its useful purpose in the years ahead. If we have been misled all these years, into thinking that the government may use many other methods of granting the use of public funds or putting a charge on them to assist exporters, then it is a rather serious thing. I would hope that no such action is contemplated by the government in the future in regard to export credit assistance to those selling commodities in other parts of the world.

Mr. Speaker, in these few remarks I have sought to make clear my point of view. I regret very much that the minister has not seen fit to deal with this point, because the principle involved here has to do with the increasing of the amount of money made available under the one clause of the act that is being amended. We are providing \$100 million of the taxpayers' funds and I am old-fashioned enough to believe that we are pressing pretty heavily on taxpayers these days and making very heavy demands indeed upon

[Mr. Speaker.]

them. That being so, I should hope that every care is exercised in examining any legislation of this nature that is brought before us, to see that the use being made of it is of such a nature as will also help to relieve the burden on those taxpayers. I think this provision of \$100 million will have that effect. I am prepared to support the addition of the \$100 million but I think it is a grave mistake for us to blandly assume that we can provide sums of money like this without being very acutely conscious of the burden it does impose upon our taxpayers. I was going to say our citizens generally, but our taxation has become so heavy that really the terms "taxpayers" and "citizens generally" are synonymous.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, if I have appeared to belabour the point, I have done so for a purpose, because I think this matter is of the utmost importance. Export in our economy is so important that there can be no hope of prosperity in this country without the very heavy sale abroad of Canadian goods. If I have appeared to take a few minutes longer than might be expected on this, what appears on its face to be a simple bill, I have done so with the full consciousness of its importance. I hope that when we get to the committee stage the minister will deal with the points I have raised and will give a responsible and carefully thought out answer to them, if there is any answer available; and if there is not, of course he will have to stand condemned by his own failure to do so.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, as has been indicated in other years by other hon. members, our party endorses the principle inherent in the operation of the Export Credits Insurance Corporation. Also, as was shown a couple of years ago with respect to a concept of that operation similar to the one now before us, we are in agreement with this particular approach.

Two or three years ago, by way of an amendment to the Export Credits Insurance Act we, at the insistence of the government and with relatively little explanation at that time, removed from office as a member of the corporation the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Coyne. In 1959, when Mr. Coyne was fired from his position as a member of this corporation, we wondered what was the reason for it but we were given no explanation at all by the government. Perhaps we did receive an answer, though, for those doubts which we expressed in 1959. We received the answer during the last session when the government attempted to