

Financial Administration Act

debate in Parliament. However, in hindsight it is not even clear that the recommendations which came from the Opposition side, the amendments which were proposed and largely ignored by the Government, would have made any difference. The Government was eliminating the title of Postmaster General to avoid the need for a responsible Minister to stand in the House and take it on the nose for all of the problems that the Canadian people were and still are experiencing with the Canadian postal service. I know that the appointed President of the Canada Post Corporation has been doing his best to sort out the mess at Canada Post. I do not believe that he has been using Parliament, the members of a standing committee or the House of Commons to assist in rectifying this difficulty.

The seriousness of the problem is outlined in a recent newspaper article which compares the Canada Post Corporation with the United States postal service which operates as a branch of the Internal Revenue Service in the U.S. In order to get the Post Office out of the hair of the politicians, the Government created a Crown corporation. These are the consequences. The deficit for the 1983 fiscal year was still \$440 million. Productivity was up somewhat, but the cost of mailing a letter was to remain at 32 cents at least for the coming year. That sounds reassuring until we compare that with the situation in the United States, where, with no public funding and a 20-cent postage stamp, the American post office recorded its second consecutive year in the black with a surplus of \$616 million and a productivity level 44 per cent higher than its Canadian counterpart. The U.S. postal service pays wages which, when adjusted for the differential values of the Canadian and U.S. dollars, are still 10 per cent higher than wages paid to postal staff in Canada.

Our colleagues on the Government benches tend to believe that they and their political appointees can run business better than the private sector. Why is it, then, that in the U.S. the citizen pays 20 cents to mail a letter and in Canada we pay 32 cents and absorb a deficit of close to \$.5 billion annually?

The reason really has to do with the fundamental questions which are before the House at this time. They ought to be debated at much greater length than we are presently being given the opportunity to do. It really has to do with the illusion of change which the Government is trying to create by bringing a number of Bills through Parliament in a hurry before it goes out with a final gasp to meet the Canadian people and argue that it deserves another chance. It is a ruse to put this Bill before the House at the present time and then to limit debate when the Government has had 10 years to deal with this question. It is merely trying to create an illusion in the eyes of the Canadian people. As the Government has done in every previous election it has won, through sleight-of-hand and some misrepresentation it has suggested to the Canadian people that everything will be better in the future if it is re-elected.

I think the Canadian people are much brighter this time as they contemplate the position in which they will place their x on the ballot in the next election. They are going to realize that it is the same tired old Government playing the same old

tricks on the Canadian people as an excuse for its inability to bring expertise and proficiency into the management of our national affairs, to deal with the tremendous wastage and incompetence of the management structures of many of our Crown corporations, and to face the question of sunset comprehensive auditing and other matters in a more serious and responsible way. I trust the Government will hear these words and allow this debate to continue, rather than putting the garrotte on us once again as it has done so often in this present session of Parliament.

Mr. Ron Stewart (Simcoe South): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to participate again in the debate on Bill C-24, an Act which allegedly would make Crown corporations accountable to Parliament. However, in the true Liberal tradition, there are escape clauses which take the teeth out of the Bill. The Government would not even accede to a six-month hoist for a meaningful discussion period to enable meaningful amendments to be brought forward.

I admit that Parliament will get a say in the creation of new parent Crown corporations, but of course the Cabinet will regulate the proliferation of Crown subsidiaries. Rather, the Cabinet will be empowered to do so. However, past experience has shown that we can expect little in the way of restraint when it comes to new opportunities to intervene in the free marketplace with yet another arm of the octopus which has become known as the Trudeau Government. The result is bankrupt Crown corporations. That is really what they are; they are propped up by government financing. In reality they are Crown corpses. The Canada Development Investment Corporation is proof enough of that.

The Auditor General calls them sub-governments. In reality they are sub-governments, sub-human Crown corpses. With a federal election looming, we can expect many more subsidiaries to be created in order to provide refuge for Liberals who are running scared and looking for that refuge. In fact, the process is already under way.

The number of Crown corporations has increased from 307 in 1981 to 336 at the present time. While the number of parent corporations has decreased from 76 to 67, the number of subsidiaries has gone up from 110 to 128. Where is the accountability? Other corporate investments have also increased, from 94 in 1981 to 112 today. The CDIC now has 88,000 employees and has a finger in everything from aircraft production to farm machinery to office technology to energy. And most of these Crown corporations are not working properly. This Bill will do absolutely nothing to control the proliferation of the kind demonstrated by the CDIC.

Of course, this is consistent with the Liberal approach to governing. Where a problem exists, they throw taxpayers' money at it. Where a problem does not exist, they create one by setting up a Crown corporation and funnelling our money into it. We end up with the same negative results and some more Crown corpses. These government creations are not accountable to Parliament now, and they will not be if this Bill ever becomes law. We intend to see that it does not, at least not in its present form. Now we have closure looming over us