

• (1250)

In the de Havilland sale, a statutory instrument, a form of regulation, was used. Under the terms of that regulation the shares were sold to Boeing and the proceeds taken in.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that over the last few months this government has refused to show Parliament what the statutory instrument was. That was a statutory instrument passed under a statute that says: "the government may sell or dispose by regulation". This government passed a regulation, a law of Canada, and has refused to show the law to Parliament. I cannot believe it. As I stand here, I cannot fathom how a government would refuse—how a Governor in Council would refuse—to show Parliament a law that was enacted under a law of Parliament. Yet that is precisely what has happened.

The joint committee for the scrutiny of regulations has requested that statutory instrument and the government has refused on the grounds that the statutory instrument was a cabinet order and contains confidences of cabinet.

I say to this House that if we cannot see one of our laws, we are in very serious trouble in this country.

That process is happening separate in a committee and that committee will want to see that statutory instrument.

There is a second case and it involves the payment by the government under what is called a remission order, the payment to a taxpayer of taxes which were collected and in relation to which the government feels that the taxes should be reimbursed to the taxpayer.

This particular remission order was called the Stelco remission order. Prior to the Stelco remission order involving payment back to the taxpayer of several million dollars, there were three other steel companies that had received remissions. With reference to that same committee of this Parliament, the minister of revenue has been asked for the details of the remission order, how much and to whom? This is the government paying back government money to a taxpayer. We have asked, and do you know what the government has said, Madam Speaker? "You cannot see it; you may not see how we have spent your money, reimbursed it to the taxpayer."

Government Orders

In relation to clause 16(1) of this bill, the operative section, the government is authorized to dispose of these assets. It simply says: "notwithstanding any regulation made under this act, notwithstanding any other law that may have been enacted, the Governor in Council may, in accordance with such terms and conditions as the Governor in Council"—that is basically the Prime Minister and his ministers—"shall determine or considers advisable, dispose of, sell, purchase, lease".

That authorization will presumably not happen by means of a regulation or a statutory instrument. It is going to happen because somebody writes it down on a piece of paper. I have already pointed out to this House that we cannot even see the statutory instruments that disposed of previous assets. If that is the case now, how are we on behalf of our constituents going to be able to see the piece of paper that is not even a statutory instrument?

How are we going to be able to see the terms of sale and what we have done with the proceeds from the sale of these assets?

With its subclause 16(1) the government is doing a complete and utter end run around on the accountability to Parliament. That is just totally unacceptable in this country. I thought we had procedures for accountability. This new section removes even the statutory or legal instruments that one could re-address and scrutinize.

The government does not even want to pass them. In subclause 16(2) the government is back on the old track of authorizing these sales, leases, dispositions, et cetera, by way of a regulation and by way of a statutory instrument.

I am saying to Canadians if they do not have a statutory instrument and if all they have is a wish list written down in cabinet among the ministers and the Prime Minister then we will never get to see it. Those documents are cabinet confidences which remain sealed for approximately 25 years. That is wilfully covering up what the government is doing with the sale of these assets and the disposition of the proceeds. That is totally unacceptable.

I pointed out these two instances involving the Stelco remission order and the de Havilland sale. Both are being addressed and I want to tell the House what we have had to do on this committee.