

Energy, Mines and Resources

Mr. Beatty: This is the way in which he feels he should protect the moneys of the taxpayers of Canada. Surely we are entitled to ask, Mr. Speaker, what he has done over the course of the past two years.

The minister did not spell it out. When he spoke to us a few minutes ago, he did not indicate what his intention was, what sort of Crown corporations will be created. Will the President of the Treasury Board be getting up in this debate to tell us that they have had a full discussion in cabinet and that they know what Crown corporations will be created? Does he know? If he does, surely he should share that information with Parliament? If he does not, how can he conceivably be expected to be taken seriously by Members of Parliament when he asks us to support this bill?

It is just impossible, Mr. Speaker, to understand how the President of the Treasury Board does not feel that he has direct responsibility.

What more do we need, other than the evidence of the behaviour of some Crown corporations in recent years, to recognize that what Mr. Lambert talked about, what the Auditor-General talked about, and what the Public Accounts committee talked about, is essential. Do we need more evidence than the questions which have been raised in the House of Commons of recent days about Uranium Canada, a shell corporation, and agent of Her Majesty, acting on behalf of the Government of Canada, which has been charged with crimes by the Government of Canada because of the creation of an energy cartel a corporation which is pleading that it cannot be prosecuted because it has a Crown immunity? What better indication do we need as members of Parliament to convince us that we do not do our jobs properly unless we supervise the actions of these Crown corporations?

What more evidence do we need, Mr. Speaker, than the AECL incident to indicate that members of Parliament were not doing their job in properly scrutinizing the activities of that Crown corporation, that we needed the authority to do that?

An hon. Member: The Polysar case.

Mr. Beatty: What more evidence do we need than the Polysar case, or the Air Canada case? I believe that in the Air Canada case there was a new Crown corporation set up by the directors of Air Canada which cost the taxpayers \$9 million. What more evidence do we need that Members of Parliament, if they are to discharge their responsibilities, must be given a role to play and must be able to have some regime of accountability on how this money is being spent.

I asked the President of the Treasury Board what more evidence did he need to have than Consolidated Computer, which I believe—and he can correct me if I am wrong—was wholly owned, ultimately, by the Government of Canada, a corporation for whose liabilities the Government of Canada certainly is responsible up to, I believe, \$100 million.

An hon. Member: \$105 million.

Mr. Beatty: Yes, \$105 million. What more evidence do we need, then, to suggest that when public funds are being used the Parliament of Canada should have some role in ensuring that they are being properly used? What more evidence do we need that the President of the Treasury Board or the ministers of the Crown should have the ability and the responsibility to discharge a public trust and ensure that public funds are properly spent?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: When the members of the government ask us to support this measure, when they ask us to allow unlimited tax dollars to be spent in the future without parliamentary scrutiny, when they ask for the unlimited proliferation of Crown corporations, let them discuss Consolidated Computer with their constituents who are losing their farms or losing a home or losing their businesses or their jobs, because the Government of Canada says they do not have enough money for them to help out. What are they going to say to justify the \$100 million that was lost in Consolidated Computer because of the government's mishandling of the Crown corporation?

An hon. Member: One hundred and twenty-five million.

Mr. Beatty: It is \$125 million, my colleague says. How are they going to tell their constituents that the money is not available there to help them because the government has spent it, has dropped it down the sink, in Consolidated Computer?

An hon. Member: They do not care.

Mr. Beatty: Surely no minister should be allowed to come before the House with a straight face and ask us to pass a measure like this with that effect upon Canadian taxpayers? It would seem, Mr. Speaker, that the measure before the House is a dangerous in-run on Parliament. What they are doing is creating a rule which will enable the government for all time, if anyone questions the legitimacy of these Crown corporations, to say that Parliament approved it. They can say that Parliament said it was all right. They can refer us to Bill C-102, the blank cheque we have written for the government. For all time they will be able to say that Parliament approved it. Surely we should ask ourselves before Parliament approves it how that authority will be used in the future.

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What is incredible, if you have watched the Prime Minister defend ministers of the Crown on various issues is that he likes to say the minister was discharging his responsibility, doing what Parliament asked him to do when Parliament gave him the power. He has used that example in an number of instances. No doubt in future when the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources incorporates new corporations and runs up new debts on behalf of the taxpayers of Canada, his response will be that that minister was doing his duty as laid upon him and required of him by Parliament.

Parliament imposes no duty on the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources tonight. Parliament simply writes a