

ments and are not automatically referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments.

Although Bill C-24 goes to some length to define deadlines by which reports, budgets and plans are to be tabled in Parliament, it provides for no sanction whatsoever for a Crown corporation which ignores or breaches those deadlines. The situation identified by the Auditor General to which I alluded earlier is therefore completely ignored by Bill C-24.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, to say how Bill C-24 diminishes Parliament's access to relevant, accurate and comprehensive information concerning Crown corporations. In that respect, Bill C-24 proposes a regime that is worse and not better than the status quo. In tabling this Bill, the Government has once again demonstrated its contempt for Parliament and its penchant for secrecy.

I have only one paragraph left, Mr. Speaker. To return to the metaphor I used at the beginning of my address—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Hon. Member can only be allowed to continue his remarks with the unanimous consent of the House because his time has expired. Is there such agreement?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Hees: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their generosity. To return to the metaphor I used at the beginning of my address, Bill C-24 paints the windows of the bus even blacker and hurries us toward a precipice of more Canadairs, more de Havillands, more AECLs, more sports corporations and more money being wasted by Crown corporations, with little or no scrutiny or control by Parliament.

Mr. Lee Clark (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be afforded the opportunity to address the House on Bill C-24 this afternoon because it is a Bill which deals, at least in part, with a very important issue. What I regret very much, however, is that the Government, apparently being cognizant of the problem, has failed to go far enough in its attempt to resolve the problem.

The problem is that Canadians are deeply distressed, first, by a general lack of accountability that they believe permeates the entire parliamentary process and, second, by the growing number of Crown corporations which have appeared in recent years and by the fact that those Crown corporations appear to act in a manner which is almost beyond the comprehension of most Canadians and perhaps even beyond the comprehension of most parliamentarians. The difficulty causing this problem is that there is a lack of information being made available to the public regarding the nature and number of Crown corporations, regarding their methods of operation and, indeed, regarding the very purpose of their being.

I find it almost unbelievable that there is a lack of awareness among the public about the number of Crown corporations which exist, because these Crown corporations are in themselves economically significant. In many cases, they represent a drain upon the public purse. As well, new Govern-

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ments which have come to power have found it difficult for a number of days and indeed for a number of weeks to determine exactly how many Crown corporations and their subsidiaries exist. This indicates that there has been an unfortunate failure on the part of the Government to make available to the public sufficient information to permit the public to appreciate the purpose and operations of Crown corporations.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Bill that is before us today addresses the administration of only 183 Crown corporations out of the total number of Crown corporations which exist. Members who have spoken today have referred to the fact that there are 315 Crown corporations in existence. I have heard other Members on other occasions use different numbers. The public is left at sea. It is simply unaware of how many Crown corporations exist.

I believe that the Government has taken a tentative step in the direction of trying to convince the public that Crown corporations will be more accountable, but it has failed to ensure that there will be sufficient accountability for the public to feel confident about the Government's administration of this problem. Many Canadians would be quite content if there were some way for us to reduce quite substantially the number of Crown corporations which exist. In fact, many Canadians would like to see that happen. One of the reasons why they are so opposed to Crown corporations is that they believe that these institutions have failed in the past to be accountable to Parliament and to the public.

As well, Canadians are deeply distressed by the fact that they know very little about the affairs of Crown corporations, including the highly publicized ones like de Havilland and Canadair, two Crown corporations which have been in the public eye in recent weeks. It has become apparent to Canadians, who believed that they understood the financial doings of such Crown corporations, that they are in fact unaware of important statistics and have perhaps even been misled by those who are responsible.

What we need is a complete overhaul of the entire structure of all Crown corporations which exist. We need an intensive examination of the reasons for their creation in the first place. We need an intensive investigation to determine whether or not they are fulfilling the purposes for which they were intended. We need an opportunity to determine whether or not Crown corporations are being operated in a proper administrative manner that is, in a competent and business-like manner. We also need to determine whether or not they are, in fact, fulfilling some important function.

• (1640)

Some of the better-known corporations are very much under public scrutiny. The lesser-known corporations, of course, operate almost in ignorance—the public is almost ignorant of their very being. This Bill unfortunately does very little to offset public concern. For example, the Bill will ensure that it is Cabinet rather than Parliament which will have access to vital information. There is nothing in this Bill which will compel Cabinet to make the information available to Parlia-