

Canadian National Railways, we find that it was neither the Liberals nor the socialists. It was the Conservative Party.

Miss MacDonald: And the CBC.

Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): As the Hon. Member for Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) points out, the CBC and whatnot.

Mr. McDermid: The Bank of Canada.

Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): The Bank of Canada as well.

Mr. McDermid: The National Film Board.

Mr. Reid (Kenora-Rainy River): Yes, the National Film Board. The issue that we are dealing with is not to question corporations, whether we should have them or not. We are going to have them. Her Majesty's Official Opposition likes them, supports them and uses them. We are not talking about eliminating Crown corporations. We are talking about bringing them under some form of parliamentary control. That is an entirely different matter.

● (1640)

Listening to the speeches of the Hon. Member for Mississauga North (Mr. Blenkarn), Winnipeg-Assiniboine (Mr. McKenzie) and other Members over there, I say, my God, there is no way one would know that that subject was being debated in the House of Commons. They talk about how evil Crown corporations are, how rotten Crown corporations are, and how destructive Crown corporations are. It is difficult to remember a time in the House when Members opposite have actually opposed in as rabid a fashion as they are opposing this Bill the establishment of any Crown corporation that we now have. The reason is simple. Crown corporations are a pragmatic response by governments in Canada to the peculiarities of the Canadian psyche, Canadian geography and our economic system.

If we want to do certain things, we have to mobilize capital in a big way. If we are going to mobilize it in a big way, normally we have government involvement. Take for example, the CPR. The CPR is the bastion of what the Conservative Party says is right about the free enterprise system. If one looks at the way in which the CPR is put together, one finds that it is the original Crown corporation put together by a 19th century government. Who was it that financed CPR? The CPR could never have built those railways had it not been for the funding that Sir John A. Macdonald's Government provided. He did not take equity. He took debt, and he provided grants. By and large, that is what Crown corporations are all about. The issue is not whether we will have Crown corporations. We are going to have them. We will have Crown corporations with the full support of the House of Commons.

What is the issue? Obviously the issue is how to bring them under control. How do we provide parliamentary control? How do we provide parliamentary input into control over and above that control which we now have and over and above the

Financial Administration Act

control which the Government has through the Cabinet to the Cabinet committees? That is what this Bill is about and that is what the subject of debate ought to be. The last two times the Bill has been debated, those issues have never been touched in a serious way by Her Majesty's Opposition. Instead, we have had catalogues of complaint about this, that and the other thing.

Let me give a few ideas, for which I take no credit. They were discussed in the special committee that looked into parliamentary reform. One issue that we examined in a very real way was the question of Crown corporations. How can Parliament get its finger on Crown corporations in a way that will be seen to be useful and effective? We have two problems.

First, you do not want to take Crown corporation inspections and investigations out from under the committee of the House of Commons that has relevance in that area. It would not make much sense to set up a special committee on Crown corporations, have the committee look at Air Canada, and not have the Transport Committee look at Air Canada as a Crown corporation as well. You cannot look at air transport in Canada unless you look at Air Canada. The consequence is that we have to find a way to look at Crown corporations in a way which would make some sense with regard to the role which they play in our economic system and in our governmental system, as well as look at Crown corporations as a vehicle in themselves.

We talked about how to accomplish this duality. How could you look at a Crown corporation as an instrument and an institution to see whether we had gone too far or whether the Crown corporation had expanded too far? How do we look at the issue of whether the time has come to sell a Crown corporation or parts of it? What is the time to split them and re-combine them in different ways?

The House of Commons by and large has shown very little interest in those subjects. The House of Commons is an extremely reactive body. It is not a leadership body. We have never really had debate in terms of asking about Crown corporations in this way. Even the debate that we have had so far on Crown corporations has never really dealt with those questions.

Let me outline some possible hypothetical solutions which have to be tackled, probably in the new Parliament, if we want to get a grip on Crown corporations. First, we should set up a special committee of the House of Commons directed toward looking at Crown corporations as Crown corporations, not from the point of view of their activities. I believe that can best be done by the various standing committees that have an operational interest in a particular field. For example, the Transport Committee should look at Air Canada, the Energy Committee should look at Petro-Canada, and so on. You can run down the whole gamut in that way.

I believe it would be worth while to have a special reference to establish a special committee to look at Crown corporations so as to examine at least two matters that trouble me about Crown corporations. The first matter is the enormous variety of Crown corporations. If you look at the recent list of Crown