

Appointments to Crown Corporations

independent advice for committees. Having made that little qualification, I think the hon. member showed good initiative in giving Parliament this opportunity to get some things off its mind about boards and commissions.

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey): Mr. Speaker, I should first of all like to compliment the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) for putting forward this motion. I support the objectives contained in it. As I see the resolution, it is aimed at giving the public more control over public enterprises such as Crown corporations by the appointment of Members of Parliament to the boards of those corporations. I want the subject matter of this motion to go to the committee for detailed study, so I will confine my remarks to two or three minutes.

While I favour the principle the hon. member has advanced in his motion, I am rather dubious about some of the techniques which I understand would be involved. I wonder at the wisdom of appointing individual Members of Parliament—politicians—to boards of Crown corporations. Would this not tend to put additional powers and advantages into the hands of individual politicians, perhaps to the detriment of other members of the House? I do not know, but this is a criticism that I imagine might be raised in some quarters.

Second, is it altogether wise to put politicians in the position of being able to influence the operations of highly technical, in some areas, Crown businesses or public enterprises? Many Members of Parliament are already occupied with committee work, some members being on two or three important committees. They also have House business and constituency responsibilities. I think it would be very hard for them to find additional time in which to be effective members of boards of Crown corporations. Instead of placing Members of Parliament on the boards of Crown corporations, we would do better to consider sharpening up and adding considerably to the powers of committees of the House, enabling those committees to be much more searching and effective in dealing with ministers or those who report for Crown corporations.

I agree with what the hon. member on the government side said a short while ago, that there should and must be a closer relationship between the House of Commons and Crown corporations. As I wish to see this matter go to committee, let me summarize by saying I

[Mr. Fairweather.]

support the principle proposed by the hon. member, although I have some doubts about the technique. I resume my seat now and urge that a vote be taken so the matter can be further studied by the committee.

Mr. Jack Cullen (Sarnia): Mr. Speaker, I share the comments and the feelings of the hon. member who spoke before me in complimenting my colleague who moved this motion. It was not my intention to speak on the motion, but having seen that there is no shortage of speakers this afternoon, and the likelihood of the motion being talked out getting stronger and stronger, I felt I should speak on it.

I did not write to the hon. member and express my support, but I have spoken to him personally to indicate that this is the kind of matter to which we should give more consideration. I have indicated to him the frustrations that one feels when serving on the Public Accounts Committee, which is faced with a situation that of course occurs after the fact—after the money has been spent and after the mistake has been made. We as members of the Public Accounts Committee have to make searching inquiries. We often find how difficult it is to get the kind of information we want from Crown corporations.

I agree with my friend, the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), who has indicated that on many occasions it is necessary to have Crown corporations perform particular services. I submit, in support of the hon. member who moved this motion that it is equally true that Members of Parliament should be sitting on these corporations, not with the view of providing more money but with the view of doing the job we are required to do here, that is, to serve the public interest.

I have found the Auditor General's report to be quite unfair. I have told him in person, and I intend to tell him again before he brings in his 1969 report, that his reports are unfair and one-sided because we hear only one side of the case when it comes before the committee. We do not hear the other side until two or three years later. In the meantime, the contents of such an unfair report are spread across the country.

Let me refer to a recent situation. We directed questions to officials of the Department of National Revenue on eight different points. There had been eight different criticisms made, and in respect of each of them the Department of National Revenue was able to give a satisfactory answer. For a