

Supply

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Parliament may be asked to vote funds for the company and its consent will be needed to transfer the Government's holdings in the Canada Development Corporation to the CDIC. In time, however, the CDIC will have all the power it needs to create, buy, sell, and manage companies in any business whatsoever, either in Canada or anywhere around the world. Parliament will neither have a right to be consulted before important actions are taken nor to control the billions of dollars involved.

Even the creation of new Crown corporations to be owned by the CDIC will not require Parliament's involvement because Bill C-123 exempts subsidiaries of Crown corporations from parliamentary debate.

The President of the Treasury Board spoke about Bill C-123 being designed to ensure that there would be improved parliamentary accountability, but I would like to know where that accountability will be. I would ask the President of Treasury Board and the Liberal speakers who will follow where that accountability will come from in the case of the CDIC. Will Parliament have the opportunity to utter even one syllable before these new corporations are incorporated as subsidiaries of CDIC? Will it have any control over the budgeting process? Was it consulted before the CDIC was created? What does Bill C-123 do in this very important field to enhance accountability to Parliament and to enhance the ability of Members of Parliament to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to them by the people of Canada?

The Canada Development Investment Corporation may well not have to come to Parliament for funds for very long, because profits from any of its subsidiaries can be spent without Parliament's consent. And when the CDIC sells assets, such as its shares in the Canada Development Corporation, it will hold on to the proceeds of these sales and will be able to use that money to subsidize any losing companies or buy whole new corporations. All the Government need do is move into the portfolio held by CDIC sufficient companies able to pay their own way. It can recycle the funds from winning companies to the losers. It can take the profits to expand the involvement of CDIC. At no time does Parliament come back into the picture unless CDIC comes back to Parliament to ask for more funds. When it sells Crown corporations or their assets, that money will not flow back to the Consolidated Revenue Fund so that Parliament can hold the purse strings. It will flow into the CDIC which is accountable only to Senator Jack Austin. The money can be spent however the CDIC chooses, without Parliament being asked for consent.

How dare the Minister talk about Bill C-123 and about parliamentary accountability when everything that he has done and everything being done by the Government at present will subvert parliamentary accountability, not enhance it.

The prospect of such a massive company, controlled by the Prime Minister's protégés and involved in a wide range of economic activities, above the laws that its private sector competitors must obey and beyond Parliament's scrutiny, is frightening for anyone who believes in free enterprise or parliamentary democracy. And yet the facts are clear and

incontestable. The company has been formed without Parliament's consent. The Government has installed its cronies as Chairman of the Board and President. It has listed some of the companies that will be transferred to the CDIC and will be asking us to approve \$400 million more for two of those companies this evening. The President of the Treasury Board has already tabled Bill C-123, which will permit the creation of an unlimited number of new Crown corporations.

Crown corporations have long been seen by the Government as a useful means of pursuing its policy goals. Only recently, however, has the Government discovered just how useful they can be.

The Government does not see Parliament as the central institution in our democracy. The Liberals see Parliament as a pain-in-the-neck, a roadblock in their way. To the Liberals, Parliament is not the central institution in Government; it is an obstacle to be removed or avoided at all costs.

By using Crown corporations instead of Government departments to achieve its purposes, the Government can almost totally avoid Parliament. Our consent is not needed to create the corporations; if they are carefully set up, their finances can be managed outside the budgetary process, thereby avoiding messy parliamentary debate and reducing the apparent size of Government spending. If embarrassing questions are asked, the Government can always plead the need for commercial confidentiality.

It is ironic that the President of the Treasury Board should be given the responsibility for supervising Canada's Crown corporations and for developing a regime of accountability. When I was a Minister in Treasury Board I often wondered why the windows of the Department were sealed. Now I know the reason. When the building was erected it was suspected that he might one day become President and they wanted to avoid the prospect of public servants jumping from the windows when they learned that.

The President of Treasury Board, who has been told by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that he has the responsibility of enhancing the credibility of Crown corporations, showed his ingenuity earlier this summer when he was Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. He had a new company created under provincial legislation in Newfoundland. He did not take action under the Canada Business Corporations Act but used the provincial companies legislation. The Government then issued an Order in Council that made that company a Crown corporation. The Government had been following the procedures in the House so it knew about Madam Speaker's ruling that it is not possible to put funds into a program which has not been approved by Parliament, but it found a way around that ruling. It chose to use a fund which was created to assist industry and it used that fund in order to put money into this new Crown corporation.

What is at issue here is not the need for the new Crown corporation or whether it serves any useful purpose; the issue is whether this precedent will be increasingly used in the future and what effect the precedent will have upon the solemn obligation that we have as Members of Parliament to control the public purse strings.