

Crown Corporations

is now lacking in light of some of the decisions which have been made.

One of the problems created by the policies of crown corporations is that inevitably, if the policies are good, parliament does not get any credit for them. However, if they are bad policies, parliament and the government, whether it be formed by those on the opposition benches or by us on this side, get the blame.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is pretty galling to me when as a member of parliament I return to my riding to be blamed and criticized by taxpayers for some decision taken by a crown corporation over which I or this parliament have no control and no opportunity at the policy-making level at least to present a point of view. I see no danger in one lone member of parliament ruling a crown corporation.

Mr. Whelan: Do not forget the I.D.B.

Mr. Walker: My hon. friend from Essex South suggests that the I.D.B. might well use the services of a member of parliament. I do not exempt the I.D.B. or any crown corporation or board from having the benefit of an hon. member serving with it, without pay.

• (6:20 p.m.)

My next point has to do with raising the status of members of parliament. There has been a move in the last few years around here, not just by public relations and press releases but by making possible new areas of opportunity, to raise the status of the member of parliament and to attempt to employ more of his experience. We have a tremendous amount of experience in this house springing from the municipal level, the legal and engineering fields and other fields. There has been quite a move to try to raise the status of members of parliament. I suggest one of the best ways this can be done is for a member of parliament to have an opportunity, on behalf of parliament and the taxpayers, of becoming involved at the director's level in the operation of some of our crown corporations. I do not see any objection to this sort of thing.

One of the problems that the backbencher or member of parliament has to face is that he has to try to cover a whole field of knowledge and try to know a little about everything. My own view is that a parliamentarian could carve out a career for himself by becoming expert in one or two fields, thus being of great assistance to this house. If we

had hon. members from any side of the house who in debate could give us facts that we do not always get now, it would be to the benefit of this house. Sometimes when a minister has to report to the house he is only reporting information that in my judgment could be called hearsay, although such report is often written and comes from a crown corporation.

May I mention another thing that may not be generally known. Many crown corporations do not come under the control of the Auditor General. I understand that many crown corporations, especially the ones running at a deficit, do not use the services or come under the aegis of the Auditor General. The Auditor General of Canada does not have the same authority with respect to crown corporations in the examining of their books as he has with government departments. In that regard the crown corporations are doubly cut off, so to speak, from public scrutiny in the expenditure of money.

Some other countries do not employ the techniques I have suggested and I am sure that other speakers will mention this fact. I can only tell hon. members of one country where they go much farther in these matters than my suggestion. Members of the two chambers of the Swedish parliament are elected by parliament as members of the boards of directors of two institutions in Sweden which are placed directly under parliamentary control, namely, the Bank of Sweden and the National Debt Office. The members of parliament are elected for a period of three years. They represent all the democratic political parties represented in the Riksdag and are members of considerable experience in parliamentary life. Members of parliament are appointed by the government to the boards of directors of more important government-owned corporations in Sweden as, for instance, the Ore Mining Company of Kiruna, the Tobacco Monopoly, the Kreditbanken which is the state bank for commercial transactions, the Scandinavian Airlines System, and the like. Members of parliament are also elected by the government to the boards of directors of privately-owned insurance companies in Sweden. I do not suggest that we in this country go as far as this.

I believe that a careful reading of my resolution will allay any fears on the part of those people who think that what I propose would go this far. I suggest that my resolution would return to the members of this parliament one of the basic rights and basic responsibilities that we have, which is the