

*Energy, Mines and Resources*

mismanagement of a Crown corporation which has been granted agent of Her Majesty status, then I have not done my job as a Member of Parliament.

If constituents of the hon. member for Regina West who are having a hard time paying their mortgages, who find there is no assistance available to them from the government, are being forced to pay taxes as a result of the mismanagement of Crown corporations because the hon. member has decided that the liabilities of Crown corporations automatically become liabilities of his constituents, then I say he is not doing his job either.

I will return to my first point, Mr. Speaker. Even if it were not enough that Parliament had a responsibility to exercise some prudence and to show some concern about the management of the moneys we hold in trust for the people of Canada, surely when the Canadian people are beginning to lose respect for their institutions and when respect for the rule of law is being lost, the government should act to restore respect for the rule of law. It should not take actions which would create a new group of companies operating in the marketplace which would be immune to criminal legislation and would be able to take the law into their own hands and disregard law passed by Parliament to protect consumers.

This is not the time to slacken laws; it is the time to ensure that the government meets the most stringent standards and sets an example that can be respected by the people of Canada.

At the present time some 50 Crown corporations operate in the marketplace as agents of Her Majesty. This bill would give the government authority to incorporate an unlimited number of new Crown corporations, every one of which would automatically be agents of Her Majesty.

To go a step further, because they would be incorporated under the Canada Business Corporations Act, these corporations would have the ability to incorporate subsidiaries and those subsidiaries yet further subsidiaries in Canada and outside Canada, under federal companies legislation, under provincial companies legislation, and under international legislation. All of these would automatically be agents of Her Majesty and would automatically have the ability to stick the Canadian taxpayer with any bill incurred because of mismanagement.

There have been a number of instances where mismanagement has existed.

**An hon. Member:** Name one.

**Mr. Beatty:** Consolidated Computer. The hon. member is unaware of the fact that \$125 million of taxpayers' money was squandered in this way. How many instances do we need before members of the House, and particularly members of the NDP, are prepared to show respect for taxpayers' money, money which is coerced from their constituents?

This is a crucial issue, Mr. Speaker. If Parliament defaults tonight and allows two standards to be set, if Parliament allows the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to sign

the wallets of the taxpayers over to these Crown corporations, then I say that as members we have no right to take pride in the way we have conducted ourselves.

This bill is dangerous, Mr. Speaker. My amendment would simply reduce some of that danger. I would ask the people of Canada to judge members of the House on the way they vote for this bill. All the amendment would do would be to provide that all these Crown corporations would not automatically become agents of Her Majesty. The government would still have the right, as it does today, to make any Crown corporation it chooses an agent of her Majesty.

The only thing that we are asking the government to do tonight with this amendment is to confer that authority on a case by case basis and not by a blanket grant. Surely the people of Canada have a right to expect no less from us.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West):** Mr. Speaker, I have a few quick lessons for the expert on Crown corporations who does not even listen to members of his own party in the provinces.

In the first place, a Crown corporation is automatically an instrument of Her Majesty the Queen, no matter how you slice it, in any province or in the federal government.

Second, the hon. member mentioned credit ratings for Crown corporations as if they had somehow earned an advantage. Credit ratings have always had to be earned, whether in the provinces, under the federal government, in the United States or in Europe. They have had to be earned by the way a Crown corporation was administered. I invite the hon. member to ask the Premier of Ontario or of British Columbia or of Alberta about that little item.

I gather from the hon. member's remarks that he feels a number of Crown corporations have always been above the law. If that is true, it means that all of us, and particularly the hon. gentleman, have not been doing our job.

**Mr. Beatty:** That is right.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Why would the hon. gentleman condemn Crown corporations because members of this House have not been doing a good job?

**Mr. Clark:** Because he has read the bill.

**Mr. Benjamin:** His logic escapes me. The hon. member also held that massive losses or massive investments are borne by taxpayers. I invite the hon. gentleman to explain the difference, because I am just an innocent country boy from the prairies. For instance, if \$1 billion is invested by citizens in a private corporation, that corporation pays dividends or interest. If they lose money, they do not pay dividends. If they make money, they pay taxes. I thought that was just pure and simple grade nine stuff. But the costs of that investment are borne not only by the investor but also by the consumers of the company's product. If I am wrong, I hope the free enterprisers