

year we have had to vote to supply Canadian National with amounts of money which were in that range whenever the CNR financing Bill came to the House. We heard the hue and cry about how terrible it was that this Crown corporation was losing all that money. However, as soon as it starts to make money, we hear the hue and cry from the same people who now say that these Crown corporations have no business making money and they should be privatized. I find that strange.

When a Crown corporation is making money, surely it benefits the taxpayers. Members of the Official Opposition and the Liberal Government claim to be sound businessmen who use sound business practices. Why would they want to sell off the corporations that are making money? Why do they not try to privatize the corporations that are losing money and save the taxpayers that expense? In my province, we have heard that same hue and cry over the last two years. We have heard it in this place and we read about the hue and cry over privatizing Crown corporations in the financial pages of the newspapers. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that in a modern industrial economy, whether it be that of Canada or of a host of other countries, enterprises take the form of one of the following or a combination of two or three of the following: public enterprise, co-operative enterprise or private enterprise. That is called a mixed economy. The trouble is that Crown corporations run by Liberal and Tory Governments create a mixed up economy.

Our national governments have never formed Crown corporations because they believed in them. They set them up either to bail out bankrupt private-sector companies and save hundreds of millions of dollars in losses for mainly wealthy investors or because there is a public need either locally, regionally or nationally which the private sector refused to fulfil. In the latter case, the Government of the day has no choice but to establish a Crown corporation. There is nothing intrinsically bad or intrinsically good about Crown corporations.

The necessity for accountability of Crown corporations is something about which Members on all sides of the House agree. The question is how we go about getting that accountability. I am proud of the history of the Government in my province. In the early days of the Tommy Douglas administration of the 1940s, a legislative Crown corporations committee was set up. The annual reports of provincial Crown corporations automatically by statute went before that Crown corporations committee. I do not think that that would be practical in the federal Parliament because there are several times as many federal Crown corporations as there are provincial Crown corporations in any given province.

No one parliamentary committee could by itself deal with all of the annual reports and get accountability from all of the Crown corporations. Therefore, it would seem to make sense that, by statute, the annual report of every Crown corporation should be referred to the appropriate standing committee of Parliament. That would be a good beginning, and that system is in place in the case of a number of Crown corporations. One

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of the very few times, and in fact perhaps the only time, a former Minister of Transport, Mr. Lang, accepted an amendment I proposed was when it was made statutory that the annual report of Air Canada be referred to the Standing Committee on Transport. That requirement is now incorporated into the Act and applies to Canadian National Railways as well. It should apply to all Crown corporations.

Something more must be done regarding accountability. First, each standing committee should be appropriately staffed with accountants, research staff, actuaries and whoever else is required so that every member of a committee, no matter to which Party he belongs, can be armed with information and questions to ask which have been arrived at independently. This must happen if any member of a committee is to be able to fulfil his duties by asking appropriate questions and demanding appropriate answers.

Second, as and when a Crown corporation's annual report goes before a standing committee, the committee meetings should not only be public but the public should also be free to appear and put forward their concerns, complaints and questions. I hope I am not speaking out of turn, but this might be starting to occur. It may well be that in the next week or two, the Transport Committee will decide to hear one or two witnesses other than those of Via Rail when it deals with Via Rail's annual report. And why not? Why not provide an opportunity for groups and individuals to appear? It would seem to me that when a committee reports to the House on its dealings with an annual report of a Crown corporation, it should feel free, even though it may well recommend things that are contrary to current Government policy, to report such and to recommend such. It still remains the prerogative of the Government, whoever is in power, to decide whether or not it will accept or reject those recommendations in whole or in part. That is the final responsibility of the Government. I have no quarrel with that, so long as each individual member of a standing committee has some degree of independence, whether he be on government side or on the opposition side.

• (1630)

It seems to me also that there will be—and undoubtedly should be from time to time, depending on the kind of enterprise that it is—joint ventures. There should be a mix. Frankly, I would like to see, for example, Petro-Canada, federated co-operatives, the United Co-operatives of Ontario, and one or two private companies in joint ventures.

I think my hon. friend from Ottawa Centre (Mr. Evans) raised the matter of privileged information, private and confidential information, in joint ventures. I would see nothing wrong with having part of the hearings—where it was a joint venture in which the private sector and the co-operative sector were involved—held *in camera*. The committee could report in confidence to the Government with its recommendations. Because every Crown corporation has to operate within the framework of the general policy laid down by the government of the day, and it is the duty of the board of directors to pass the internal policies of the Crown corporations that stay within