

Financial Administration Act

and the Opposition side. We are pledged to do this, and I am sure we will. It has to be done in the first 12 months of our being in office because, after you have been in office more than 12 months, you become ministerial and you do not want Members of the House bothering you. You do not want these nuisances in the House giving you more work or adding to your burden, so it slips your attention.

In the first 12 months of our administration, we have to change this House fundamentally. One change would be to set up committees of this House with real authority. One of them must be a committee with full authority to check on what Crown corporations are doing or not doing, whether they are spending or not spending what they are supposed to be spending, whether they are having losses that the Government does not want to admit to or whether there are some embarrassments the Government wants to hide and is therefore shy about seeing them come to the public light.

I do not know how much longer I have; I understand it is two minutes. In 1968 there were 38 federal Crown corporations with \$5.5 billion in assets recorded in the public accounts. Today there are 186 Crown corporations. The federal Government owns more than 50 per cent of the shares in 34 other companies and less than 50 per cent in 72 other companies. We have one in Newfoundland, Fishery Products International Limited, of which my brother is the interim chairman. They have chosen wisely with respect to the interim chairman, but I would like to see him checked by Members of this House. I often had to check upon him when I was in business with him. Entrepreneurs need someone to check on them. They need the heavy hand laid on them every now and then.

While I am pleased and delighted that my brother is the interim chairman of Fishery Products International Limited, it does not lessen my concern that Members of this House and the committee of this House should have the right to see exactly how they have done, what their plans are, what their losses might be and to report back to this House.

It is my information that today federal Crown corporations have \$67 billion in assets and \$57 billion in liabilities. That is why I want to move an amendment to the order of second reading of this Bill. I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Hillsborough (Mr. McMillan):

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-24, an Act to amend the Financial Administration Act in relation to Crown corporations and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence".

I do not know if this gives me unlimited time. I hope the rules provide me with unlimited time to speak to the reasons for bringing in the six months' hoist. The legislation now—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order, please. First I should tell the Hon. Member that his time has expired. The motion is in order. I will read the motion to the House:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor:

"Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act in relation to Crown corporations and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence".

The seconder to the motion is the Hon. Member for Hillsborough. For debate, the Hon. Member for Crowfoot.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, if there is need to underscore why we want a six months' hoist, it is obviously contained in the fact that we are dealing with a Bill, as the Auditor General has mentioned to all Canadians, that is becoming a dangerous sub-layer of Government expenditure. When we look at the fact that Crown corporations are now spending some \$4 billion annually, when we recognize that this expenditure is on behalf of Canadians generally and when we recognize that this expenditure is not accountable to Parliament itself, the fact is that we end up with government without representation. Taxpayers' dollars are being spent without the ability of the representatives of the taxpayers to influence how the money is handled or accounted for or is in any way deliberated upon.

● (1530)

As mentioned by my friend, the Hon. Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), we need to have a parliamentary committee with full authority to question the right of every Crown corporation to exist. The fact is that today we see a proliferation of Crown corporations without ever once asking if, after a Crown corporation is formed, it should continue to exist. Crown corporations that were formed in the middle part of the century still exist and this is justified simply by the fact that they existed last year. Year after year Crown corporations continue to grow. More Crown corporations continue to be added until the totem pole grows taller and taller like Pinocchio's nose. Never once do the representatives of the people have a chance to question why those corporations exist.

What is needed is a committee which is independent of the Government and independent of the Cabinet, one which can call before it every witness it wants, a committee which can subpoena witnesses, swear them to oath and make the representatives of Crown corporations establish that the corporations should either exist or vanish. If a Crown corporation cannot prove to the satisfaction of the committee and therefore the representatives of the citizens that it is either the most efficient agency for doing a specialized task or that an important task would not be done if the corporations were not committed to doing it in the best interests of the public, then that Crown corporation should cease to exist.

What we have today, Sir, is uncontrollable growth without having any mechanism in place to cause the cessation of that growth. The debt of the nation is continuing to grow. In 1976 the Auditor General signalled his alarm and he did so again in 1983. The Auditor General told us that he was dangerously concerned about the unchecked growth of Crown corporations. There are no principles to guide us when a Crown corporation is born or when it dies. Crown corporations are created at