

Dissolution of 1967 Expo Corporation

Today, the House was informed by the minister that this amount had escalated. I am sorry I cannot recall the exact amount, but it was a larger figure than the previous one.

Mr. Harkness: It is \$285 million plus.

Mr. Crouse: According to my hon. friend, the total has now increased to \$285 million. What can we do? As a nation we must pay our bills. However, these figures give the House some idea of the slap-happy, haphazard manner in which the Liberal government has mismanaged Canada's affairs. This government has shown a sense of irresponsibility which borders on insanity. The fact that this attitude persists to the present day is causing concern to many Canadians. As I have said, we must pay off our debts. But I cannot agree with the course that is proposed in this bill, which I think is unsound. I cannot help but wonder what Canadians generally are thinking about the irresponsible approach that this government adopts to our financial problems.

What did the Auditor General, for example, have to say about this irresponsibility? At page 34 of his report to the House of Commons dated March 31, 1968 he listed some examples. Some of these have already been cited by the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Harkness) and the hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Hales). I think they skipped some that are pertinent to the discussion, and one is as follows:

In the case of many appointments to senior positions, starting salaries were higher than the established minimum rates and frequently maximum rates were paid immediately or within six months of appointment. Thirty-three officers in receipt of salaries of \$10,000 or more received increases during 1967 ranging from 20 per cent to 60 per cent. Of these employees, 10 left the Corporation's employ in 1967 and received salary termination payments averaging 27 per cent of annual salary.

Then, later he says:

However, payments were made to all employees including those who did not qualify because their former or comparable positions were assured. Twelve such payments aggregating \$70,000 came to our attention during the year, the largest being \$15,425.

I presume that that was paid to one individual.

Termination payments totalling \$4,694,000 were provided for in the 1967 accounts but it is estimated that an additional \$1,188,000 will be required.

These are astronomical figures and raise some doubt about the ability of the present government to manage our affairs.

If I may return to the bill, let me read to the House the words of clause 3:

The administration and control of all the properties, rights, franchises and other assets under the administration and control of the Corporation immediately before the commencement of this Act are hereby transferred to the Minister.

Think of the power that this clause alone places in the hands of the minister! May I say at once that I am not singling out the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Mr. Pepin: The amount involved is less than the hon. member has stated, but I will be making reports on my activities, as does every government department.

Mr. Crouse: I thank the minister for his intervention, and I was about to say that I was not being critical of the minister personally.

Mr. Hales: It would be too late anyway; he has sold us the goods now.

Mr. Crouse: Yes, he has sold them now. It is his misfortune to be saddled with this particular burden, but having taken the kudos he must now be prepared to accept a bit of the blame.

Clause 4 provides still more power:

All rights of creditors against the Corporation and all actions pending against the Corporation are unimpaired by the transfer to the Minister of the administration and control of the assets heretofore under the administration and control of the Corporation; and all subsisting liabilities of the Corporation and actions pending against the Corporation may be enforced or continued against the Minister in like manner and to the same extent as they could have been enforced or continued against the Corporation.

The minister is going to be pretty busy. The clause to which I really take exception is clause 6, which provides:

The Minister shall dispose of the assets and liabilities to which this Act applies in such manner as the Governor in Council, with the concurrence of the Lieutenant Governor in Council of Quebec, may direct.

Under this government the people of Canada are losing control of their property and financial rights. Why could not the minister use the offices of the War Assets Disposal Corporation for the purpose of disposing of these assets? Since the government has been telling us every day that they are waging a war against poverty, the very least that the government should do, in our opinion, is to call for public tenders with regard to the disposal of these assets.