

*Canadian Commercial Corporation*

arise in which it would be important and useful to have a government agency operating. But we are now asked to provide more money for this corporation and in general to enable it to increase its operations.

It would seem to me that on the evidence of this second annual report for the year ended March 31, 1948, there is no reason to believe that the business of the corporation, other than that of acting as agent for the defence department, is on the increase. Rather the evidence is that it is on the decrease, and that seems to me to be quite proper; because I should have thought that as we got further away from the war, and as the abnormal situation became slightly more normal, people would be better able to look after their own business and would not have to rely so much on a government corporation. So we shall wish to ask a good many further questions on this point and others when we are in committee.

The report for 1948 states:

There has, however, been a substantial change in the activities of the corporation, resulting from the tapering off of foreign government purchasing operations in Canada, which, however, has been offset by an increase in purchasing activities on behalf of the Department of National Defence.

Another thing one observes, at which perhaps one is not surprised but a little disappointed, is that the report of 1947 expressed the hope that as time went on the corporation would be able to do with a smaller staff; but if my memory serves me correctly, actually between 1947 and 1948 the staff of the corporation was increased by a very small number—I think only two.

I do believe this house is entitled to have the fullest evidence given it as to the work of this corporation: first of all, that it needs more money. As I say, its operations are contracting on that side of its business other than acting as purchasing agent for the Department of National Defence, and so far as I can see, in that capacity it does not need any capital moneys at all, because it is merely acting as an agent and, as I understand it, the accounts are sent directly to the Department of National Defence. The corporation therefore needs no funds for that, except for its ordinary operating expenses.

As to the service of the corporation to the Department of National Defence, it seems to me the minister makes a *prima facie* case there. One can understand that people who are in the defence department may not be businessmen, and that it may be a sensible arrangement to have this plan continue. But we want a great deal of information from the minister as to the nature of the import and export business which it carries on now. This brings us back to our old question of control.

[Mr. Macdonnell (Muskoka-Ontario).]

While I give the government credit for abandoning certain controls, nevertheless it seems to me that under a measure of this kind what goes out by one door comes in by another, and if the Canadian Commercial Corporation is going to play an important part in the import and export business, then it does in fact exercise in that way a considerable control over business.

As I have said, the report makes it clear that a great deal of the corporation's work for foreign countries, and for UNRRA, which it did immediately after the war, is coming to an end; and it is hoped that its activities in the import and export business will continue to decrease. In view of the fact that the latest information we have is almost a year old, I think the minister should give us figures which would bring us up to date and give us an indication of the course of business of the corporation in the last year. Otherwise we are rather in the dark.

It is getting close to one o'clock, and I suggest that when we come back at three the minister should be able to bring us up to date in that matter so we can get a better picture of the trend or tendency of the corporation's activities. My hope would be that in this past year, with a greater amount of normality returning to business, the tendency which is described in the 1948 report would be still further advanced; and I would certainly hope that the need for governments to enter into the import and export business would be lessened.

By the sheerest coincidence I met a man in this building last evening who told me he was in the export business, and by accident he mentioned the corporation. I am not able to give the details of this, and to that extent this portion of my remarks loses some effect; nevertheless this businessman—a bright, active fellow—did not seem to think the Canadian Commercial Corporation was helping him very much. In fact I think he would have been very much inclined to agree with the remark made by Winston Churchill in speaking about the socialists, that what the people wanted was to have the government get out of their way and let them carry on their own affairs. I do not wish to emphasize that or to be unduly critical of the corporation, because I think in certain ways it has performed a useful function; but just before resuming my seat I suggest to the minister that at three o'clock he should give us the fullest possible statement of last year's operations by the corporation. I should like him to indicate exactly the volume of the financial transactions it has carried out, as compared with the previous year. He should also indicate to what extent it has been acting for foreign governments, and in what particular