

Dissolution of 1967 Expo Corporation

January, 1966. I will quote in English the statements of Mr. Winters.

[English]

I do want to say, in order that hon. members will be aware of the controls that are exercised, that the act provides that the corporation's expenditures must be approved by the board, the treasury board of Canada, the governor in council of Canada, as well as the treasury board of the province of Quebec and the lieutenant governor in council of the province of Quebec.

[Translation]

That statement, Mr. Speaker, was made a year before Expo 67 operations began. I am coming back to the quotation:

[English]

The corporation operates under a master plan which budgets for all expenditures and revenues. Annual capital and operating budgets are approved by the board—

The board of the Corporation.

—the treasury board of Canada, the treasury board of Quebec, and the governor in council and the lieutenant governors of Canada and the province of Quebec. That is quite a gauntlet to run.

I shall continue because I think this is very important:

● (4:50 p.m.)

In addition, all expenditures of the corporation exceeding \$100,000, or \$25,000 where property is being acquired, require advance approval of the board, the treasury board of Canada, the Quebec minister on the advice of the Quebec treasury and the governor in council. I found the control procedures to be in keeping with good sound practices. It might interest hon. members to know that the corporation's operating procedures have been patterned on those of government departments and crown corporations and conform to the best practices of private enterprise.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, the government should see to it that the amounts are spent in an orderly and responsible way. The former minister had given us the assurance that the government would exercise a more efficient control on the Crown Corporations' administration. That was said a year before Expo. We have now come to the winding up of that company's assets, properties and securities, and the minister says that the Auditor General had made those remarks, I believe, once the Exhibition was over and that the government had done the utmost to make sure that the amounts would be properly spent.

That is why I refer to the Auditor General's report, pages 32 and 33, and more particularly to paragraph 65, that shows precisely that the

Of course, a deficit adds the already heavy burden the taxpayers must bear through many taxes. But we should not dwell only on the negative aspect of Expo. There is also its positive aspect, that is the various undeniably benefits Canada derived from it. The Quebec government and the municipalities are not without having also somehow benefited by it.

There is no point in emphasizing the benefit, for the country as a whole, of the flow of new visitors invited here on that occasion, who would probably not have come to Canada under other circumstances. We should not forget intangible factors such as encouragement to industry, innovation in the field of employment, and also the important income directly or indirectly accrued to the federal government through taxes levied on building materials and goods sold in Canada during the time of Expo. Had the federal government, however, accepted from the start the suggestions offered by the members, the deficit might have been curtailed. I remember, among others, a suggestion I made to the then minister of Commerce, the hon. Robert Winters. I had suggested allowing for the time of Expo a lottery the profits of which would have helped to meet part of the deficit. At that time the hon. minister had appreciated my suggestion though he did not follow it.

Considering the results of such a lottery in the city of Montreal, I believe that the 50 million people who have visited Expo would have, indirectly though voluntarily, contributed to bring down the deficit we are complaining about today.

The hon. minister was speaking a while ago of the Paris international fair of about one hundred years ago. I would like to remind him that it was precisely on this occasion that the French national lottery was instituted.

[Translation]

This is why I say, Mr. Speaker, that the government tell us about the deficits which they must assume, but rather cleverly, they evade a little too easily the responsibilities that were theirs, that is, they had to make sure before and not after that these moneys would be spent reasonably.

In order to enlighten a little the hon. minister of Industry and Commerce, who is responsible for Expo to the House, I would like Mr. Speaker, to refer to page 387 for the record of the House of Commons debate of the 28th of