

Mr. Beatty: Nonsense.

Mr. Gray:—and accountability of Crown corporations.

The Opposition motion obviously ignores completely the steps the Government has taken and intends to take to deal with the very important matter of improving the accountability of Crown corporations. The motion of the Opposition is superficial, one-sided and incomplete. It ignores completely the need for the flexibility of the Crown corporation concept and the major contribution Crown corporations have made and will make to the well-being of Canada and its people.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I call upon all Members of this House to reject overwhelmingly this specious and empty motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray). Perhaps now, though, it is time for some facts to be injected into this debate, because it is clear that the President of the Treasury Board neither understands the legislation that he is being called upon to defend nor has any grasp of reality as it relates to the problems posed by Crown corporations in Canada today.

Mr. Gray: We are not going to get any facts from you, just fiction.

Mr. Beatty: If the President of the Treasury Board had read the Auditor General's Report, he would have seen the Auditor General warn Canadians of a sub-government, largely invisible to Canadians, beyond Parliament's reach, competing with our citizens in the marketplace but having special advantages over them, employing more people than are employed by the federal Public Service, costing billions of tax dollars every year and steadily growing in size and power. That sub-government is the array of Crown corporations that moves our mail, produces our radio and TV programs, transports us across the country, builds aircraft, sells uranium, lends money, pumps gas and touches our daily lives in a hundred other ways.

In theory, Parliament authorizes the creation of these corporations and supervises their activities. In practice, Parliament's involvement is minimal, and shrinking. Many of these corporations conduct their affairs in secrecy, seeing little need to explain to the taxpayers, who pay billions of dollars to subsidize them each year, how that money is being spent.

Try to find out how much it costs the Canada Post Corporation to participate in Intelpost, or try to discover how much business Intelpost moves between Washington and Toronto. I did, and I was told that it was none of my business as a Member of Parliament. That information is classified.

Try to find out the cost of the CBC's logo, which looks like a flying pizza. You will not find that out but that is a secret too. Ask the Government how two of its Crown corporations participated in the energy cartel. That information is classified and indeed it would be a criminal offence to give out some of

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that information. Or try to find out how much taxpayers will be paying Joel Bell, the new President of the Canada Development Investment Corporation. We are not entitled to know that.

The Auditor General pointed out that the size and power of Crown corporations today is massive and largely beyond Parliament's control. But there is nothing really very new in his findings. His predecessor found the same thing six years ago, as did the Public Accounts Committee, the Lambert Commission, the Privy Council Office and various other studies which have taken place since. What is new, however, is that at the same time as the Government talks about making Crown corporations more accountable, it is moving quickly to put the corporations even further beyond Parliament's reach.

The President of the Treasury Board talked about Bill C-123. Bill C-123 will give Parliament's blessing for the Government to create an unlimited number of new Crown corporations in any field whatsoever. Any of these corporations which the Government decides to make agents of Her Majesty will be free to price-fix and publish misleading advertising without having to fear prosecution. They will borrow on the Government's credit rating and Canadian taxpayers will be automatically responsible for their debts.

Parliament will not be asked to pass Bills to create the corporations, as we did for the Canada Post Corporation or for Air Canada. Instead, Parliament's participation when the Government decides to set up a new corporation will be limited to three hours' debate in the House and three hours' debate in the Senate. When a corporation itself is creating a new subsidiary, however, there will be not one syllable, not a single word said in Parliament, no parliamentary involvement whatsoever.

A few weeks ago, the Government created a new Crown corporation, the Canada Development Investment Corporation, because their attempts to pressure the Canada Development Corporation, in which they hold only a minority interest, had failed. They had tried to instal Maurice Strong, a former Liberal candidate, as Chairman of the CDC but were forced to back down because of the public outcry. Instead, they have created a whole new corporation for Mr. Strong. Its President will be Joel Bell, who has prospered from the Government's generosity and goodwill in the past. It will report to Senator Jack Austin, the architect of the infamous energy cartel. The elements of patronage in the corporation would be serious enough in themselves, but from the point of view of Parliament what is far more serious in the long run will be how the corporation was created and how it will function in the future.

The corporation was formed without a single word of debate in the House. Parliament was neither informed nor consulted before the corporation was created. Yet the Government is in the process of building what may soon become the largest holding company in Canada, dwarfing in size Conrad Black's holdings or the Power Corporation.