

*Crown Corporations*

ate thing. The new Government has found this loose end dangling and it is now dealing with it in what amounts to a few minutes of Parliament's time.

Over the last 10 years, Auditors General and the Lambert Commission Report have spoken to the failure of Government to hold Crown corporations accountable and particularly the failure of parliamentary accountability. Some steps have been taken with respect to Government accountability but the fact is that in the busy life of Cabinet Ministers and the Government in general, the original purposes get lost. Crown corporations drift along. Their management does not quite know what to do about them. As I stated when we were debating the Canada Development Corporation, the idea of the distinctive economic activities of Crown corporations has basically been lost as far as the Government of Canada is concerned. I would appeal to the Parliamentary Secretary and through him to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret), a Minister who has a number of these Crown corporations under his wing, to look seriously at the fundamental question of establishing the mechanisms by which Parliament can in fact hold Crown corporations accountable.

I wrote at length about the Lambert Commission's recommendations in *The Parliamentarian* some two or three years ago. The Commission recommended that there should be the fullest possible disclosure of all relevant information to Parliament, that Crown corporations should adapt and share with Parliament a strategic plan including long, medium and short-range goals and that committees of the House of Commons should have the right to call the management of Crown corporations before them in order to get them to account directly for their stewardship of Crown corporations. As it exists now, when the Auditor General wants to find out about, for example, Petro-Canada, there is no power, either through the officer of Parliament or through the Public Accounts Committee, to get to the bottom of matters which are of grave concern and which may well have been extremely costly to the people of Canada.

There has been an agreement that this Bill go forward relatively promptly. You are encouraging me to continue, Mr. Speaker. However, I will not take up the invitation. I will simply say to members of the Government who are present and listening that this is a subject which was ignored by the previous Government. There are some models of this subject but not too many in the provinces. In the Province of Ontario, the legislature of which I was a Member previously, the Procedural Affairs Committee reviewed agencies, boards and commissions every summer. It looked rather lightly, I am afraid, at half a dozen of them. With the new committee procedure we have here whereby committees have the power to hire staff, there are the resources for committees of Parliament to spend time reviewing in much greater depth the operations of Crown corporations.

The President of the Treasury Board knows that he and his colleague, the Minister of Regional Industrial Expansion (Mr. Stevens), do not have a great deal of time to look at these things. It might be helpful if, from time to time, their efforts to

provide direction and a sense of purpose to Crown corporations were reinforced by Parliament. Since Parliament is the ultimate place where responsibility ought to lie, it seems to me that whether or not it would be useful to the Government, it would be appropriate if Crown corporations, which amount to tens of billions of dollars worth of assets and are an extremely important part of the economy, were not forever distanced from Parliament.

As the President of the Treasury Board will recall, when he was in opposition, there was a bail-out of Canadair and de Havilland. I am sure that he has asked himself, as I have asked myself, whether or not those companies would have got so far off the track if there had been some form of parliamentary accountability to find out what the devil they were doing and why they were taking on enterprises so far removed from their original intent.

The corporation to which we are now referring seem to have assets of \$9 or a few hundred thousand dollars. They are trivial and will not be missed. However, I would urge the Government to look not just to a series of housekeeping Bills from time to time but, when they find curiosities, eccentricities or anachronisms in the area of Crown corporations, to look toward putting the management of Crown corporations and their accountability before Parliament on a much more substantial, positive and regularized basis.

● (1520)

**Mr. Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the Hon. Member for Athabasca (Mr. Shields) on debate.

**Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to remark briefly on the comments of the last Member who spoke who decried the position of the Government and the need for gaining control of Crown corporations.

I would like to remind the Hon. Member that gaining control of Crown corporations is done at the board of directors level. The way this is done at the board of directors level is to appoint a board of directors who will make themselves accountable to the executive of the Government. All of the appointments we have attempted to make to Crown corporations in this Government have been decried by the Hon. Member and the members of his Party. They have decried the fact that we appoint members to the boards of directors of these Crown corporations for the very control about which he speaks. I suggest that the Hon. Member is perhaps speaking from both sides of his mouth.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

**Mr. Speaker:** Mr. de Cotret, seconded by Mr. Hnatyshyn, moves that Bill C-60, an Act to authorize procurement of the dissolution of certain Crown corporations and to amend or repeal other Acts in consequence thereof, be read the second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.