

lot of money, and that is why I think we should have more control over the accounts and books of these Crown corporations.

As far as employment is concerned, today, about 265,000 people work for federal Crown corporations. That is about the same number as are working in the Public Service today. And there are not only federal Crown corporations—

[English]

—we also have many provincial Crown corporations. In my own Province of Saskatchewan we have a very proud and honourable tradition and heritage of having many Crown corporations which have made a tremendous impact and played a tremendously valuable role for the people of Saskatchewan. In fact, you will find that historically all three Parties in this House, and when they have been the Government in various provinces, have created Crown corporations, supported them and nursed them along the way. That, of course, includes the Conservative Party, who are often very critical of Crown corporations in this country today. I think sometimes they are being a bit hypocritical when they speak against Crown corporations. One need only look at Bill Davis in Ontario and the Crown corporations in that province, or at Peter Lougheed in the Province of Alberta with PWA and many Crown corporations like that, plus their involvement in the oil industry. That shows the Conservative Party historically and currently believes that Crown corporations have a major role to play in our country and society.

As I said, in our province we have seen the contributions of many Crown corporations. I am thinking now, for example, of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation, the Saskatchewan Government telephones, and more recently the establishment of the Saskatchewan Potash Corporation which now controls about 40 per cent of the potash in our province. That is the largest potash corporation outside the Soviet Union. These Crown corporations have made a tremendous contribution to our country and our society.

● (1440)

As I was saying before, hundreds of thousands of Canadians work in the various Crown corporations throughout the land. Some of these corporations are very big. Hydro-Québec is a very large Crown corporation that has made a tremendous contribution.

I and many people in my Party are concerned that often Crown corporations are not as accountable as they should be to Parliament, the legislatures and the average citizen across the country. In the 1940s the then Premier of Saskatchewan, Tommy Douglas, decided that if Crown corporations were going to play such an important role in the province they should be more accountable. In Saskatchewan a special Crown corporations committee was established. The reports and activities of all the Crown corporations in Saskatchewan must now be referred automatically each year to this particular Crown corporations committee. Therefore there must be accountability. The officers, presidents and chairmen of the Crown corporations must appear before that particular legisla-

tive committee. They must be accountable. They must explain what their plans are and be available for cross-examination.

I believe that is the direction we should be taking in this Parliament as well. My friend, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin), has often said that the annual reports of CNR, Air Canada and all the other Crown corporations should be automatically referred to the relevant parliamentary committee. In that way we, as elected representatives, will have a chance to make our point of view known and to say what our constituents want us to say about the direction of these particular Crown corporations.

I can speak from experience of the problems we had with the CNR in my constituency. In Melville we have approximately 700 CNR employees. They have had many frustrations with that particular Crown corporation. Many of the workers in the CNR feel it is time that that Crown corporation was socialized or re-nationalized to make it more responsible to the ordinary Canadian citizen. That is one of the frustrations I have with the system we have today. Communities are affected by the insensitivity of a large Crown corporation like the CNR. In many communities in my constituency rail lines have been abandoned and elevators have been pulled down because we could not persuade the CPR to continue service to these communities on these branch lines. We have had many fights about retaining branch lines. We have won some and lost some. It would be much easier to win these battles if the CNR were more accountable to this Parliament and to the people of Canada. That must be one of the objectives of Bill C-24 which is before the House today. Hopefully, Members of Parliament can amend the Bill at committee stage to provide more accountability to Members of Parliament.

The important thing is to make sure that Crown corporations are more accountable to the ordinary citizens of the country. Canadair, de Havilland and other Crown corporations have been in trouble recently and have been aided and assisted by the federal Government, rightfully so in some cases. However, in some cases I wonder very seriously. When I think of these corporations I get angry because there is not more accountability, we cannot have the officers appear before parliamentary committees and we cannot have more input into the decisions made by these Crown corporations.

While we have this type of Bill before Parliament we must discuss attempting to democratize Crown corporations a lot more than they are today. In this country we must have a lot more economic democracy and a lot more decentralization of decision making and power to give more power to the ordinary citizen. There is no reason why workers in Crown corporations should not have members on the boards of directors. There is no reason why the workers should not be more directly involved in the management and control of the Crown corporations on an ongoing, day to day basis. That is the kind of step we must take.

Our country is a federation and therefore the provinces must be more involved in some of the national Crown corporations and national institutions which we have in the country. I am thinking, for example, of the Bank of Canada and the impor-