

Mr. Speaker, for most routes you are obliged to go on Pacific Western Airlines. Although that company does not come under our jurisdiction because it is owned by the Government of Alberta, it is still a Crown corporation. In my opinion that is another candidate for privatization. I do not know what the Government of Alberta is thinking of when it wants to run an airline; it is just as wrong for that provincial Government to run an airline as it is for the federal Government to operate its airline, Air Canada.

If you do not want to ship your freight on the river system but you do want to ship it on the high seas, then you get involved with Canarctic Shipping Limited in which the Government of Canada has a major participation. Therefore, in the transportation field they have us covered, coming and going.

Similarly in the field of communications, another very important part of Canadian life, we have the CBC, with a virtual monopoly on much of the video and TV in the north. Our telephone services are provided by a subsidiary of CN, the famous Northwest Tel. Much of the radio and electronic communication in the north is done by satellite, which satellites are owned by none other than Telesat Canada, another Crown Corporation. Therefore, in those most important aspects of life, the field of transportation and communication, we are veritably at the mercy of Crown Corporations, whether federal or provincial. I might add that it is provincial Crown corporations rather than territorial. The Crown corporations of other provinces are acting extra-territorially, as it were.

In the resource field, the most important aspect of economic life, you have Petro-Canada busily raking in its 25 per cent back-in on all the oil and gas plays in the Beaufort, High Arctic and Mackenzie. You have subsidiaries of Petro-Canada getting involved in the mineral business. We have that famous corporation, 107744 Canada Inc. busily engaged in mineral exploration. I would like to address this particular matter later because in my opinion Petro-Canada is not allowed, by virtue of the Petro-Canada Act, to get into the mineral exploration business. Yet it has set up a subsidiary that purports to have that authority. It is certainly not the authority that Parliament wished to give Petro-Canada.

In the oil and gas business, too, we have Panarctic and Polar Gas and a number of other corporations or consortia in which the Government of Canada in the case of Polar Gas, and also the Government of Ontario through Ontario Energy, have the major say. One other thing I would mention is the Government's participation in mining companies such as Nanisivik, and the Government's 30 per cent interest in the Norman Wells oil field.

In the field of fishing, the Government, through its Crown corporation, the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, has a monopoly on the buying and selling of fish. It holds the lives of those fishermen in its control. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the north has been used as a proving ground too often for Liberal social theories. Very often this social theorizing has utilized the mechanism of Crown corporations.

Financial Administration Act

After that brief introduction, I will now look at the Bill itself. Basically, as I read the Bill, there is not a great deal of difference between what it proposes to do and the status quo. What it does is rationalize the status quo to a certain extent and try to introduce some uniformity of treatment for various Crown corporations doing things of a similar nature. But it is certainly not revolutionary legislation. It does not address the great, outstanding public concerns which have been debated in the press and in Canada at large for some time. There is very little on the question of accountability. In my opinion what is more important is the prevention of government abusing its powers and authority by using Crown corporations so to do.

Frequently what the federal Government would be unable to do through democratic institutions such as Parliament, it can do through the back door route using Crown corporations. Major policy and financial commitments can be made using this back door route when the Government is unwilling to appear before Parliament to argue its case. One of the most obvious examples of this was the Petro-Canada acquisition of Petrofina. There was no debate; only a privileged few knew what was going on. However, Canadians were eventually presented with a bill for \$1.5 billion, which they had to pay in taxes imposed on gasoline. All this was done through the secret back door route using Crown corporations when it should have been done up front in public. It is that route which scares off the present Government.

The Bill will not prevent an abuse we have been witness to on many occasions in this House. The Government will stand up one day in reply to questions and say that, so far as a Crown corporation is concerned, it is an autonomous body, that it has no control over it at all if things go wrong. On the next day it will take quite a different position. The Minister will get up in his place and say that he represents the shareholders of this Crown corporation and is, therefore, quite right in dictating major policy changes for that corporation and telling shareholders and the board of that corporation what they should do.

● (1150)

The gentleman who is now Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) and who was formerly Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is famous for the use of this tactic, especially when dealing with Petro-Canada. In dealing with the Petro-Canada acquisition of Petrofina he said that he told Petro-Canada to take over Petrofina. He justified that as acting on behalf of the shareholders of Petro-Canada, the public of Canada. On other occasions when things went wrong with the operation of Petro-Canada, he denied that he had ever heard of such an organization.

In looking at the Bill we find that it is virtually a skeletal Bill, as is so much Liberal legislation. Most of what really happens will be dependent upon regulations which we have not yet seen. We have objected to this approach to legislation so many times in the past that it is hardly worth devoting a lot of time to it now. We should make careful note of the power that the Governor in Council would have under Clause 124(4)(b)