

Canada Development Corporation

business in the insurance field—going back to the days when we did that on the floor of the House instead of by letters patent under the Canada Corporations Act—the people seeking that right have to appear and justify their claim, but anybody else who felt that his rights were being interfered with also had the right to appear and offer his defence.

We still agree that that shall apply in the case of a private company, whether it is insurance, investment, banking, railway, pipe lines, or what have you. I think that rationale makes sense. It is perfectly all right, when there is a bill going through Parliament that is for the general good, that affects everybody, for Parliament to process it by itself, through its committees but without hearing witnesses. But when a special interest is sought, when legislation is desired to set up a special interest, then these two things must happen: the promoter must justify his request, and those who are affected by the possible implementation of that request must have the right to appear and state their defence.

• (3:30 p.m.)

We think, Mr. Speaker, that this is a hybrid bill in the sense that it is more of a private bill than a public bill. It sets up a special interest, a special group of people and it gives them certain special privileges, certain rights to make profits, to do this, that and the other thing in a way that is not available to the entire populace. Therefore, when this special group of people is to be given a special right, the bill takes on the character of a private bill and should be treated in that manner.

It would be difficult to spend much time trying to prove to Your Honour that this is a bill with heavily private connotations without getting into the substance of it, but may I, even under the limitations of a procedural debate, say a few words that border on substance. In the first place, as I understand it, the Board of Directors of the Canada Development Corporation is to constitute from 18 to 21 persons, only four of whom are to be appointed by the government; the rest are to be named at a general meeting of the shareholders.

In the second place, the bill is drawn in such a way to make it clear that in no sense does the Canada Development Corporation come under the control of Parliament. True, the bill could be amended; the objectives could be changed, but so far as the normal operations of the corporation are concerned, that corporation is farther away from us than many of things we have set up. Parliament is to set up this baby and give it free rein. We are to have no more control over it than we would have over Canadian Pacific Investments, or an insurance company, a mutual investment company, or what have you. It is a private corporation that we are establishing.

Third, the bill makes it clear that the corporation is not an agent of Her Majesty and is not a Crown corporation. There is no suggestion in the bill that it is a corporation for the general advantage of Canada. In other words on all counts, Sir, what we are establishing is a private corporation.

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

I do not want to come back too often to the little twitting that my hon. friend from Peace River did about this being a socialist proposition. I have to tell him that he had better read the bill again.

Mr. Baldwin: I said elements of socialism.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): There is less socialism in this than I have seen in any bill for a long time.

If I may go on with one more point in support of my contention that this bill sets up a private company, I draw attention to the extensive and complicated language of clause 27. This clause contains references to ways in which the Canada Corporations Act shall not apply. Then, this clause gets to the point where it says that in relation to this company the usual references to letters patent in the Canada Corporations Act shall refer to this bill. In other words, Sir, what we would be doing by the passing of this bill is that in effect we would be taking the place of the bureau that grants letters patent to private companies. We are providing the letters patent that would normally be provided to a private corporation. We are doing so by the passing of this bill, and we say so quite clearly in clause 27.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That is what we did last year.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Private companies do not now need to come to Parliament as they did for many years. They go to the appropriate office and get letters patent, but we are giving this corporation a little special treatment. We are giving it the letters patent by the passing of this bill.

Therefore without developing that point any further, Your Honour, I assert that this bill is not a socialist document. It is not even a Walter Gordon document. It is a private outfit, and the passing of this bill establishes special privilege for a limited number of people.

May I also point out that if this bill is passed and this company is set up it will have certain powers that could be used to the disadvantage of other Canadians, indeed I would say to the disadvantage of all Canadians. We have now in existence in this country the Polymer Corporation, Eldorado Nuclear Limited, PanArctic Oils Limited, Northern Transportation Limited, and perhaps one or two other entities of that order, and these entities are either wholly owned by the public or largely owned by the public.

But under this bill the Canada Development Corporation would be given the right to buy these Crown companies, and bring them under what would be partly public and partly private ownership. At the moment they are under public ownership. They belong to us, to the people of Canada, but under this bill they would become largely privately owned.

Now, Sir, at the moment I am trying to stay away from the substance, although it will be obvious from what I have said that I do not approve of this. But I go back to the point I made earlier, about the rationale behind the treatment accorded to private bills, namely, that the