

There are other not so well-known examples of financial surrealism. In my Province of British Columbia, forestry is the largest economic activity. It generates more direct and indirect government revenue and employment than any other sector of that economy. The wealth comes from the forests of British Columbia, which are 95 per cent owned by British Columbians. At the present time, the forestry industry in British Columbia is in a mild recovery stage.

It is not with little dismay that we find the Export Development Corporation financing forest development projects in Mexico, Peru and Poland. These developments will compete with the forest product exports of British Columbia. At a time when the British Columbia forest industry is experiencing a fragile recovery, a Crown corporation gives it a competitive slap. The money used for development in Mexico, Peru and Poland is sorely needed by the Canadian forest industry to give it the competitive edge it needs in international markets.

The list of Crown corporation shortcomings is frightfully long. I refer to these examples in order to demonstrate the necessity of accountability. Supposedly, the Government which has brought forward Bill C-24 understands the need for ministerial responsibility, control of proliferation and accountability.

In a brochure entitled *New Legislative Proposals for the Control and Accountability of Crown Corporations*, the Government reveals that new measures are needed to strengthen the control and accountability of Crown corporations. How does the Government think this can be achieved? It can be achieved by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of Parliament, government, boards of directors and managers of Crown corporations. The Government then decides that by amending the Financial Administration Act it can strengthen the controls and accountability of Crown corporations. Thus we are presented with Bill C-24.

On March 15, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) said that Bill C-24 would "clarify the roles and responsibilities of Parliament". When we examine the nuts and bolts of the legislation we find that the role of Parliament is indeed clarified. The role of Parliament is to be as insufficient as it always was. Parliament will have no control whatsoever over the creation of subsidies by Crown corporations. Naturally, this is exactly the area in which we have witnessed the greatest proliferation of Crown corporations.

• (1210)

Bill C-24 also allows a Minister to create a Crown corporation if he or she already has the power to do so through an existing Act of Parliament. There are several instances in which this can be done. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) could incorporate new parent Crown corporations through the existing Department of Energy, Mines and Resources Act or through the existing Atomic Energy Control Act. The Minister would not even have to come near Parliament if he desired to establish a new Crown corporation.

Financial Administration Act

We have as well the situation where a Minister might table a special Act in Parliament in order to incorporate a Crown corporation. What a startling occurrence this would be. Parliament would actually be consulted. However, review would be limited to 30 days in committee and seven hours of debate in the House. Closure of this nature, Mr. Speaker, is tantamount to criminal. What starts as a good idea ends up being a cruel joke. Is the Government seriously going to allow only seven hours of debate on matters of such import to the people of Canada? Obviously the Government intends to treat Parliament's role as it always has—as a charade.

Another area which the Government has not come to grips with is ministerial accountability. Bill C-24 gives authority to Cabinet or to the Treasury Board. Here we have groups of Ministers who are supposed to be accountable. We will not have accountability until an individual Minister is given responsibility. It is a fact that we will not have accountability while authority rests with groups rather than with individuals. If we need proof of this, all we have to do is look at Canadair or de Havilland. When the chips were down no one was accountable.

Bill C-24, an Act to amend the Financial Administration Act, has many more flaws than those which I have touched upon. For instance, there is an insufficient role for the boards of directors. Essentially boards will be advisory councils without the hands-on authority which is needed in the leadership of Crown corporations. To make Crown corporations efficient there has to be an onus of responsibility placed on the board of directors. Responsibility has not been the forte of this Government and Bill C-24 certainly symbolizes that fact. This Bill is supposed to correct many of the shortcomings in the relationship between Parliament and Crown corporations, but it does not. It makes a mockery of what Parliament is supposed to be. We are not dealing with a matter which has many possible directions; we are dealing with a matter which has only the right direction. Bill C-24 demonstrates that again the Government is lost.

This Bill should be hoisted for six months so that a responsible government can introduce legislation which will give Canadians confidence in how the public purse is used.

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley-Hants): Mr. Speaker, I also want to join in the debate on Bill C-24. Quite frankly, I cannot think of another Bill which demonstrates more clearly the difference between a government which has been in power too long and a Party in opposition which wants to change that government. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, if we in the Opposition had been in power 20, 30 or 40 years, with a few brief "hiccups" in history when there was a change—and in the words of Mr. Pickersgill many years ago, the Tories are like the measles; everyone has to get them every so often, but when you have recovered, put the Liberals back in power—perhaps our criticisms of the serious implications of Bill C-24 would not be as strong.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, if anyone has a disease, it is the Government across the way, and it is a lot more serious than measles. It is called "Crown corporationitis". If there is one