

Financial Administration Act

there would have been a tendency to generalize, even though the case was an isolated one. In such cases, I feel that this government, as well as its predecessors, have always tried to do what was best.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this bill is a step forward, even though some people say that it is overdue, that is it is not perfect yet, and objections are raised against the redistribution of the controlling powers at the deputy minister's level. I think that such a decentralization is necessary since it enables parliament to retain its control, and since we consider estimates in parliamentary committees.

I would agree with the hon. member for Lotbinière with regard to Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, since, it seems to me the government does not have enough control over them. The hon. member for Lotbinière referred to Polymer and other corporations, including Eldorado. As for me, I am obsessed by the C.B.C. these days and that is why I would like a reform of the whole system so that ministers responsible for those Crown corporations can exert a better control over the expenditure of money.

I do not wish to be unreasonable or unfair in my expressions but it is a fact, I think, that some Crown corporations administer public funds in such a free and easy manner that it is almost scandalous.

For instance, I do not understand how the C.B.C., after showing a deficit of \$165 million, can dare to ask us an additional amount of \$14,500,000, when in this year 1969 of austerity, the government has levied an extra tax of 2 per cent, has cut off the winter work program and has cut investments nearly everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is unbelievable. The minister should be able to say: "Gentlemen, tighten your belt like everybody else." I am not only referring to salaries. I can understand that salaries must follow the rising curve of the cost of life, but I am referring to some expenditures which seem extravagant to us unless they can be justified.

To illustrate what I have in mind, I say that when the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation sends in South America, Africa or in Central America a team of 10, 12, 15 or 25 producers accompanied by their wives or mistresses, at the expense of the taxpayers, this constitutes an extravagance. I feel the Corporation should produce less exotic programs and resort to less costly items. Let us tighten our belts a little, so that it will not always be the turn of the same people to do so.

In the recreational field, if we can call it that while referring to the C.B.C., we might reduce expenditures. That might be one of the weaknesses on which I would agree with the hon. member for Lotbinière, in other words, the responsible ministers should have more control on the moneys granted to the Crown corporations, on their investments and also on the way they spend such funds.

As I said, there are areas where everything runs smoothly. A while ago, I mentioned the Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Corporation. Since its inception, that company has never been in the red. Never. It showed a surplus almost constantly. That corporation could be quoted as an example.

I shall mention the exact reverse, the case of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that we can be justified for making up the \$165 million deficit of that Crown corporation and for paying \$14,500,000 more this year, while it is a well-known fact—reported by everyone—that the corporation indulges in foolish expenses. That Corporation should tighten its belt just like everybody else.

I fail to understand it for another reason. Some television and radio networks operate at a profit. Not only are they not asking the government for \$175 or \$200 million to finance their foolish expenses but they make money.

This may be one of the recommendations I should like to put into the official record of the house now that we are dealing with Bill C-172. It could be taken up in committee and attempts could be made to find a solution that might enable the minister, parliament let us say, to "tighten" a little more, so to speak, the expenses of the Crown companies.

As for the rest, Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in this new system under which deputy ministers will control the expenses of their department within the limits of the estimates passed by parliament, provided that their expenditures are approved by parliament when the financial statement is brought in.

As for the allegation according to which the government is asking to be authorized to spend funds which have not yet been approved by parliament, it should be kept in mind that it is not utterly impossible to imagine situations where this could happen. For example, let us suppose that a government is suddenly defeated and that the estimates have not been passed. Should the administration of the country come to a stop? Would all civil servants be left unpaid until after the