

Closing Expo 1967 Corporation

delayed because of the inability of the Corporation to finalize the accounts and answer the auditors' queries. This report, which pursuant to the requirements of section 18 of the Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition Act, 1962-63, c. 12, should have been submitted by the Corporation to the Minister within three months of the close of the financial year on December 31, 1967 and laid by him before Parliament within 15 days of receipt thereof, was not tabled in the House until October 2, 1968.

It is very clear, therefore, that the constant warnings given by the Auditor General of Canada and the Provincial Auditor of Quebec were disregarded by the ministers and the government. Surely, if there is a breakdown somewhere along the line between the receipt of information to correct situations which should be corrected and the taking of the necessary action we should search and find where the breakdown occurs and have it rectified. It is just a little much when Canadians, who expected to pay \$20 million initially found this raised to \$40 million, and now discover the amount has reached \$142.9 million. I am not objecting to Expo, but I do object to this way of estimating expenditures which puts Canadians, the government, and members of this House in a very awkward position.

Mr. Pepin: It is not the same product.

Mr. Harding: Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, this is the point I am going to make. I trust that in future, if we have other commitments of the same nature, we will have adequate controls established so that we will not get into a mess similar to that which has been indicated by the Auditor General in this case.

• (4:40 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Is the House ready for the question?

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might begin with the famous words that I did not intend to take part in this debate. It so happens that such is the case, but I am brought to my feet by the suggestion of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) that the amendment posed by my hon. friend from Regina East (Mr. Burton) is only a bookkeeping technicality which might have been dealt with in some other forum. These bookkeeping technicalities can be obscure; they can be the subject of debate—

Mr. Pepin: I did not say it; he said it. I did not say it was a bookkeeping technicality; he said it.

[Mr. Harding.]

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): My hon. friend the minister said something to the effect that it was the kind of thing that my friend might have raised in some other forum. If I have "done the minister wrong" I shall withdraw.

Mr. Pepin: Don't.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): But certainly, what he said and the way he said it made me feel that I could not let him get away with it—whatever it was he said.

I am concerned about this matter, Mr. Speaker, both for its own sake and for an ancillary reason which I will allude to in a moment. I think the suggestion made by the Auditor General should be considered and if we are appropriating money, giving to Expo \$125 million, the way we do it should be made clear. I do not think it is clear at the moment; I think it is being played down as simply the writing off of a debt.

I said I had an ancillary reason for getting to my feet and it would not take many guesses for members opposite to know what that is. We are dealing here with a \$125 million deficit with respect to Expo. In my city we are concerned about a very small item, a \$1 million deficit from the Pan-American games.

Mr. Pepin: I will gladly inform my hon. friend that I have taken up this case with the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) who apparently has received representations. He is looking into the matter now and he tells me that a decision should be reached soon.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I thought the minister was going to cut me out of my remarks altogether by telling me that a favourable decision had been made. It is very nice that he interrupts me at this point and tells me that a decision is close. That is the sort of charm that the minister turns on which makes one feel that he does not need to say any more. The trouble is that around this place we have been close to decisions time and time again. I am glad to know that the Minister of National Health and Welfare is considering this, as is the Minister of Finance. He is perfectly right in saying that many representations have been made about this and I hope that fair play with respect to Winnipeg will come into effect.

On the subject of the amendment moved by my hon. friend from Regina East, may I indicate the argument that has been used by the