

Financial Administration

as well under government ownership as they would have if the companies had been privately owned.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): And, as the minister has explained, the reason is that they are not crown companies: they are his companies.

Mr. Howe: Well—

Mr. Adamson: Would the new St. Lawrence authority come under this regulation?

Mr. Sinclair: Not yet, because it has not been established. The departmental corporations, agency corporations and proprietary corporations set out in the schedule provide the classifications in which any new crown agency would be placed. Where it should be placed will be decided when the time comes. The Minister of Trade and Commerce now informs me it will come under schedule C.

Mr. Adamson: And the audit of expenditures, whether it be a company authority, or in some other form, would come under this section?

Mr. Sinclair: Yes; section 77 refers to the audit of crown companies. Most of the audits are carried on by the Auditor General. I am informed it is the intention that the St. Lawrence seaway authority will be audited by the Auditor General, and his report is of course submitted to parliament.

Mr. Green: Would the Minister of Trade and Commerce name the two companies to which he had reference a moment ago?

Mr. Howe: The Polymer corporation and Eldorado. They are the two producers.

Mr. Green: Both have monopolies, have they not?

Mr. Howe: Yes; if they did not have monopolies they would be crown companies in a competitive field, which is contrary to government policy.

Mr. Wright: When the bill was before the public accounts committee I endeavoured to have an amendment made to one of the sections whereby not only would the annual statements of crown corporations have to be tabled in the house, but they would have to be placed before some special standing committee of the house for consideration. My amendment was ruled out of order.

I agreed that it might not have been in order, although as a result of it it was found necessary to change another section which had been passed earlier. No one had noticed that in that section there was a reference to a special committee of the house.

[Mr. Howe.]

Two years ago and again this year, in its recommendations to the house, the public accounts committee has recommended that the annual statements of these crown corporations should be placed before special standing committees. I asked Dr. Clark, the deputy minister, if there was any reason from his department why these annual statements should not be placed before special committees. He said that in his opinion there was no reason.

Today the government is in business in a big way. Some of these crown corporations are handling more money than is being handled by some departments of government. I referred in particular to the wheat board and I suggested that that board be placed in one of the schedules to the act. It was pointed out to me that there were certain disadvantages in doing that, and I agreed. Probably there are regulations in the act which would not be applicable to the wheat board. However, we have this wheat board, a crown corporation, handling hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of the growers' money each year. Those growers have no way of checking the annual statements beyond reading them. There is no body representing the growers before which the annual statements of the board can be placed and considered by the growers. They must depend upon this House of Commons to do that for them.

When the act was brought in the then Minister of Trade and Commerce said that the annual statement of the wheat board would be placed before the agricultural committee at each session, but that has not been done for the last three years. Someone may say that we would have a chance to discuss this matter under the estimates. I have before me the estimates for 1951-52 and there is no item in them dealing with the wheat board.

The wheat board is not handling government money; it is handling the growers' money. The wheat board was set up to handle the assets of the farmers of western Canada. As a parliament we have the responsibility of seeing that each year the statement of the wheat board is placed before a committee of this house so the officers of the board may be questioned. I am a firm believer in the wheat board and I think the present officers are doing an excellent job. I do not think there is any doubt about the accounting they are giving, but if the wheat board is to function satisfactorily I think each year its statement should be placed before a standing committee of this house, preferably the agricultural committee, so that the growers may feel that there is some responsible section of parliament giving consideration to