

Energy, Mines and Resources

Three hours, Mr. Speaker, that is the maximum that we will get to debate a Crown corporation that might be vastly larger than Petro-Canada.

This bill is the kind of parliamentary support for parliamentary reform. I guess it is supported by the Liberals. Number one, administration by order in council, which can override all of Parliament. That is the first strike against democracy. Then the mandatory guillotine, which is strike two. Then there is the three hour limit, which is strike three.

Let me make it quite clear that we in this party are not opposed to the creation of Crown corporations, be they totally public or of a mixed public and private nature.

There are areas in Canada's economy and social fabric where Canada's collective social goals and aspirations would be most rapidly and purposefully achieved through public ownership and Crown corporations.

But we on this side of the House—and I solicit support from members on the government side—object to the methodology of this proposal. Let them answer why proposals, if they are sound, accountable and in the public interest, cannot be brought first before Parliament and with some expedition put through the House. How are we to know, as I said before, what Gopher Gulch corporation really is when it is simply on the notice paper? Is it a \$10,000 corporation, or a \$1 billion corporation, is it for exploration, is it for pulp and paper? How are we possibly to know, Mr. Speaker, with the way this has been set up? We have no access to the government reports done on it, we have no idea where the design of government is going with any particular Crown corporation or grouping of Crown corporations.

What if the minister, after passage of this bill, were to list 100 corporations on the notice paper, how is the House to know which ones to debate? And even if we debate them all for three hours and we lose them all, the minister still gets them all. I find it passing strange. At times I think that I might be in Argentina or in a chamber in some other area of the world where such potential for legislation is perhaps more acceptable.

Bill C-102 is open to abuse by a very small group within Parliament—to be exact, only five members of cabinet—backed by unlimited bureaucratic resources for design and analysis, reports that would never be available to us in the House, information we would never have access to in judging the viability or need of such a new corporation.

So it is designed in secret, it is introduced by order in council by as few as five members of the government. Within 15 days the House requires the tabling of the notice of creation, and 30 days later it comes into force unless before the twentieth sitting day a resolution requesting revocation, signed by at least 30 members or 15 senators, is filed. Even then, with no support, without one member standing in support, that can still become law.

Why 30? I am puzzled. Yesterday it was 50, today it is 30. Yet to adjourn the House of Commons, as the Tories tried with the bells ringing for a couple of weeks, requires only two members. It only requires five to force a vote. And under the

Petroleum Administration Act it only requires ten. Why would we not follow some kind of parliamentary precedent in terms of the number of members? Why is the minister so interested in making it so difficult to bring in a negative resolution? Why has he set it up in such a way that even if we do negate the idea of a particular corporation, after only three hours of debate, it can still be passed by the other place.

I think we should be puzzled, Mr. Speaker, and we definitely should not pass such a piece of legislation. Then, within six days, there will be a debate of three hours maximum, followed by a vote. However, even if the House votes to revoke the new Crown corporation, it can go to the Senate and be passed. Here, as the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe pointed out last night, is a serious constitutional question. In theory, all members of the House could vote against the proposal; or we can reverse that and see it in the Senate, where exactly the same thing can occur. So we have seen a destabilization even of the awkward system of the House and the Senate that we have so far. That is under Section 7, subsection (8).

I think we have to puzzle, Mr. Speaker, as to where the Liberals are leading the House. I am no longer confident that there are many on the government side who truly understand democracy.

In reference to the other House, it too has the mandatory 15 day passage and the three hour guillotine. So, what do we have? A bill that can spawn Crown corporations of every known variety, without prior notice to the House. As duly incorporated businesses they do not have to stay in the energy field one day or even one minute, and they can draw down unbelievable debts directly on to the taxpayer.

As was pointed out last night, there is not even a veil of security that corporations have that are incorporated in Canada, where the shareholders have some protection. The problems that are being put on to the taxpayers by this administration with Consolidated Computer were brought up many times in the House, where before they finally came to their senses \$125 million of the taxpayers' money had flowed away.

Now the government says there is not enough money for medicare and not enough for post-secondary education, that there is no money to help farmers or to help small businesses. But there is enough money around to have such poor auditing and such poor planning, and yet not one head has yet rolled over it. That \$125 million can be lost in four years, and what does the taxpayer get back? A 100,000 bucks. It is pretty fantastic.

Bill C-102 represents a dramatic rearrangement of the rules of the House. Without properly addressing and reforming the rules of the House it instead introduces a new style of legislation, which is so far-ranging, so totally contrary to our traditions. How can these Crown corporations be accountable to Parliament? When can they be formed? Why can they be formed? And they can be formed against a majority and in fact a total negative vote of the House of Commons.