

Development Investment Corporations Act

there are Liberals around, this Bill may never be debated properly again. What we are really talking about is the Crown corporations' Crown corporation. This is the big daddy. The Government has run into trouble with Crown corporations left and right for a number of years. What was the answer? The answer was to create a Crown corporation to look after Crown corporations. To create a Crown corporation to manage all others is simply to put down another layer, another veil of secrecy, and to wallpaper one more time away from public scrutiny the actual facts of how the Crown corporations and their fiscal responsibilities are managed. The Government believes that somehow another layer of paint will keep the people from knowing why these Crown corporations are, as the Auditor General, Kenneth Dye, and a succession of Auditors General have told us, becoming a sub-level of government and are one of the major areas of expenditure and debt to which there is no accessibility in the accounts.

By putting in place another agency that will come between government and corporations, we do two things. First, we layer in a way in which information becomes more difficult to obtain; and second, we restrict the capacity of Ministers to be responsible for the various agencies and Crown corporations. So we are faced with this debate to create the Canada Development Investment Corporation.

If the Liberals remain in power, we are not likely to debate this matter again because, as the Hon. Member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) has just mentioned, any increase in expenditures could be accomplished through the estimates and \$1 votes. Legal or otherwise, past Speakers have said that that would take us down the road of avoiding Parliament and public comment by putting in place an agency that, rightly or wrongly, is set free to tap public funds but is never accountable to the public for the money it is spending. That is despicable in terms of democracy. Parliament was established in the first place to put controls on the King's purse. It comes back to the fundamental reason for which we are here, and that is dollar accountability.

This Government is operating a string of catastrophes in Crown corporations. It is obviously looking for a mechanism by which it can hide the disasters which it has created. If the Bill is passed, the results will be disadvantageous for Canadians. I would like to point out some of the reasons for which I believe this umbrella agency which will look after all agencies of government is not in the best interests of Canadians.

The number of Crown corporations is not necessarily going to decrease. In response to a question I placed on the Order Paper, we learned that there were in excess of 350 Crown corporations. There are newspaper articles which estimate that there are somewhere in the neighbourhood of more than 400 Crown corporations wholly or partially owned by the federal Government. The Auditors General have underscored that Crown corporations are a sub-level of government which we are unable to tap into and for which there is no accountability or responsibility. Mr. Speaker, that is one of the most serious defects in the Bill. Even if some Minister might say that that is the Government's intended position, I suggest to you, Sir, that

unless it is specifically stated that the objective of the umbrella agency is to decrease the numbers of Crown corporations, that that is its purpose and its goal, then on the basis of lack of clarity this Bill must be amended.

• (1520)

Another flaw I find in the Bill is that there is no provision for a sunset law with respect to any of the Crown corporations, or even the master corporation itself, and there should in fact be a sunset law which will bring these corporations before committees of Parliament or Parliament itself. We have a list of money losers such as de Havilland, Canadair, Petro-Canada, Teleglobe, CN and CBC; some 350 corporations. Surely we should not just be giving birth to all these corporations and never once ask the question whether the people of Canada have the right to decide if the corporation should continue to exist.

There may have been at some point in the social and economic culture of a nation a need for a corporation to be started by government. I recognize that from time to time there will be the coming together of conditions which will cause, in the nation's interest, such a corporation to be struck. But surely that does not mean that once it is struck, it should exist *ad infinitum* without question, simply collecting more and more of the taxpayer's money.

I watch CBC's *The Journal* on television at night. I enjoy the CBC news and I feel *The Journal* portion of it is good. However, Mr. Speaker, I personally would have to question whether it is worth \$1 million a week. That is an enormous expenditure for 40 minutes of television every night. If there is not some kind of sunset provision in Bill C-25 which will automatically bring the corporation before committees of Parliament for review, then it seems to me it fails on one of the very basic and fundamental questions of Crown corporations themselves. In that respect, I submit that this piece of legislation must either be amended or should not pass. This corporation, which is presently far too removed from Parliament, will add another layer of government and, Sir, that is my third point. If there is any outcry among the Canadian people, it is an outcry that governments must become more open rather than more closed.

As the Auditor General tells us, there is a sub-layer of government which exists in the form of Crown corporations. Surely, adding another bureaucracy between Parliament and these corporations—this super corporation as a management group—is not bringing government closer but is simply hiding and shielding it, putting it in a more removed form than ever. We as parliamentarians are not going to be able to be in a position to bring to task and analyse each of those corporations. We are now going to have to go through a super mother corporation and, boy, the Government will be able to bamboozle Parliament one more time, giving us a mix of numbers and figures which point in different directions in such a way that the people of Canada will end up simply paying more and more without any hope of bringing under control the spending of their tax dollars.