

Financial Administration Act

individual ministerial accountability. That is the core of the problem, Mr. Speaker. Bill C-24 goes in the opposite direction. The individual Minister is nothing but a post box. And, of course, that is the way Government wants the system to run.

● (1430)

Let us look at the question of Canadair. Who was responsible? Was it the board of directors? The chief executive officer? The Minister? We did not have a Minister we could hold accountable for Canadair. No, Sir; the thinking of the Government is that if we had a Minister accountable for the losses in Canadair, he would have to resign, or he would have to think about it. If he was accountable for the loss of \$1.4 billion of taxpayers' money, do you not think that the Minister might have to give a moment's thought to his responsibility and hold himself accountable and resign?

Mr. Cullen: You lost the Avro Arrow.

Mr. Thomson: Mr. Speaker, that is typical. They do not want to address the problem so they throw the Avro Arrow at us after 25 years. What does that have to do with what I am talking about here this afternoon concerning ministerial accountability?

Mr. Cullen: It has everything to do with it.

Mr. Thomson: If someone lost \$1.4 billion of taxpayers' money, he should darn well resign. But under this Government's system no, Sir, we are not going to make any Minister accountable. We will have collective Cabinet responsibility and in that way no one will be responsible or accountable. A great way to run a railroad!

The real authority is, of course, exercised by Cabinet or Treasury Board; groups of Ministers rather than individuals. In being accountable to so many Ministers, corporations will continue to be accountable to no one.

It is interesting to look back at Canadair because you cannot help but use it as an example of everything that is wrong with Crown corporations. One of the most extraordinary things about Canadair, and I find it absolutely incredible, is that here we have a government trying to tell us that there is a new regime of accountability and control as far as Crown corporations are concerned. They want us to believe that. However, the board of directors of Canadair was reappointed in its entirety. Who was responsible in Canadair for the fiasco? It could not have been the board of directors because the Government chose to reappoint every single one of them. They had no responsibility. Was it the Minister? No, it was not the Minister, because there was no Minister accountable. It was the Cabinet, so what really should have happened is that the whole Cabinet should have resigned. No one is accountable except for an amorphous collectivity called the Cabinet which, in the end, ducked the responsibility.

What have they done, Mr. Speaker? They have put all the problems off on the new super Crown corporation, the granddaddy of them all, the Canada Development Investment Corporation, the CDIC. Bill C-24 does nothing but perpetuate

this lack of real accountability. That covers my four general points, Mr. Speaker, and there is much more I intend to cover in committee.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, please allow me to make these two brief points. If Bill C-24 is such a good piece of legislation, why is it not good enough for CDIC? Why does Bill C-25, the CDIC Bill, differ in so many ways from Bill C-24? For example, Bill C-24 authorizes Cabinet to appoint chairmen and chief executive officers. Bill C-25 allows the board of directors of CDIC to appoint the chairman and chief executive officer. Which is the right way? Obviously the Government does not know.

The Government says the Auditor General supports this Bill. Well, I met with the Auditor General on Wednesday for three and a half hours and I found that he had not even seen the final draft of the Bill. Nor had he seen the regulations. Even at that he expressed many reservations about the Bill. I shall leave it to him to make his case at the appropriate time.

The Government will say that I am being paranoid. Trust us, they will say, because we know what is best. We would not dream of doing all those nasty things Bill C-24 would allow us to do. Oh, no? The Canadian Ownership Account was approved by Parliament, over our objections, on the grounds that it could be used only to finance new energy companies. The revenues in the account are now going into the general revenues of the Government. On that evidence alone, why should we trust the word of the Government on anything as important as Crown corporations?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we can do better. The Government has been studying Crown corporations since 1972 and has been promising reforms since 1977. Is Bill C-24, this almost incomprehensible piece of legislative mish-mash and gobbledegook, the best they can manage after all that time? Well, when our chance comes we will show the other side not only what can be done with Crown corporations but what must be done. Bill C-24 will go where it belongs, in the trash can.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I wish only to say a few words on the Bill before the House today. The Member of my Party responsible had to be in his constituency and I will try and substitute for a minute or two. The main detailed criticism, suggestions and comments on this Bill will be made, of course, by our people at committee stage.

I am very pleased to say that in general we are pleased to have a Bill like this before Parliament. I do not think it goes far enough on the accountability of Crown corporations, which are a very important aspect of Canadian economic life, one which is often ignored by parliamentarians and not scrutinized closely enough by those of us in this place.

[*Translation*]

We have many Crown corporations in this country, and if I remember correctly, there are now about 300 or 310 federal Crown corporations. These corporations administer very substantial amounts of money, and in fact, the 300 federal Crown corporations have a total budget of about \$67 billion. That is a