

dated November 4, 1970. We were becoming anxious about what was happening with regard to that particular department.

In December, 1970, the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that a plan for a leaner, more businesslike Department of Public Works had reached the very active stage. It also said that the department would become the central agency responsible for the estimated \$20 billion in real estate owned by the federal government. Also, the Department of Public Works would manage more than \$800 million a year in government construction as the federal supercontractor. The article also says that leasing arrangements would generate money while keeping the land for government use decades and even a century later. In building highways, marine works and buildings, and in repairing existing properties, the Department of Public Works would continue its policy of calling for bids. Very likely it would do more project management—taking the place of the general contractor—on huge, long term projects to combat the problems caused by unpredictable cost price increases in the construction business.

So, Mr. Speaker, you now have the picture. In December, 1969, the Prime Minister announced that a Crown corporation might take over some of the facets of the Department of Public Works. In February, 1970, the new deputy minister, John MacDonald, spoke about new policies and new concepts. I brought in my motion in November, 1970, and a further article appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* in December, 1970. This shows how important it is for the government to consult all opposition members with regard to its plans for setting up this Crown corporation.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we have seen excellent examples of what the government does when it considers setting up Crown corporations. Recently, we debated the Canada Development Corporation bill. The original idea propounded by Walter Gordon and some others, including members of our party, who thought that the CDC would be one of the investing arms for Canadian capital and, as well, take into account the social policies required in the directing of business, has been emasculated. As I say, that idea which was brought forward some years ago has been emasculated. I should not like to see the emasculation of a Crown corporation which would deal with assets as big as those of the Department of Public Works. I hope this government will not emasculate such a corporation. It would be an excellent idea to set up a special committee and invite the Minister of Public Works, who has had wide experience in this field, to come before it. Actually, I think at his stage in life the minister could really be considered as a caretaker minister of public works. He may not be applying the initiative that may be necessary for the operations of the department and he may not consider that this matter is urgent.

We could ask the Minister of Public Works and the deputy minister, who has undertaken some detailed study, to explain this so-called revolutionary concept. The members of the committee could then make a report to the House which would be very useful. I hope that legislation would then emanate from that report.

Government Organization

• (5:10 p.m.)

Hon. members opposite may say that opposition members will have the opportunity to ask questions, when the estimates are before the Standing Committee on National Resources and Public Works. However, may I suggest that members of the opposition would not have the detailed knowledge that is within the purview of the government and it would take a great deal of time to set it forth. One of the problems with the estimates is the tendency to hurry them. Many members on the government side are not taking the right attitude with regard to making the minister answer questions relating to his particular department. I fear that if one of the members of the government suggest that we deal with this proposal in the estimates committee, it will not receive the proper consideration which would enable us to understand this important concept.

This is a step forward with regard to the Department of Public Works. In the past, the Department of Public Works has been considered the great patronage department of the government. It can be said that large amounts of money have been unwisely spent with regard to government contracts in order to benefit some of the friends of and contributors to the party in power.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gilbert: I am very happy that I have the attention of members opposite. They are now listening intently. Recently, a new concept has been developing. The political patronage concept is being reduced. I have this feeling, Mr. Speaker. With the development of a crown corporation, it may be that we will have an almost total reduction with regard to political patronage and contributors. This is why we are anxious to know what the government has in mind with regard to this crown corporation. We want to see to it that they do not emasculate this excellent idea in the way that they emasculated the idea of the Canada Development Corporation.

I am only speaking for 10 minutes on this important motion because I am sure that the members supporting the government will see the possibility of this motion being carried quickly with the recommendation that it be sent to an appropriate committee where it could be studied in dept and a report made to the House. As a result of this report legislation could be drafted to establish a Crown corporation.

Mr. Boulanger: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Gilbert: Certainly.

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just mentioned patronage by the party in power. Could he give one or two examples of such patronage in the Department of Public Works? I ask him to be very clear about it and not a sissy.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question indicates that he is quite sensitive to this patronage. He has a right to be sensitive because his party has been one