

Energy, Mines and Resources

bills provide for some accountability under the Financial Administration Act. Let us stop giving these Crown corporations an automatic and direct guarantee to call on the Consolidated Revenue Fund to rectify their mistakes.

● (1720)

Under this bill the minister can create corporations which will be able to take billions of dollars in the form of government guarantees. For example, I understand that just this fiscal year closing, 1981, there is over \$58 billion in known guarantees on contingent liabilities that are not in the public accounts of Canada. If we allow this type of legislation to go through, that situation will be aggravated to the point of national bankruptcy, and I believe that this is what we are really dealing with today. If we are going to allow a bill such as this to be passed, let us make sure that Members of Parliament have the proper tools to have an overview on the bill and access to the disclosure of the needed information to examine the mandate and efficiency with which managers and the boards of directors are serving their objectives. There must be some control over Crown corporations and, above all, there must be accountability.

The need for this accountability in Canada and within the governmental system has arrived. The clock is ticking away in the final hours because I believe that the taxpayers of Canada are close to the point where they will no longer tolerate intervention and interference by the state over the entire marketplace. The Crown corporations of this country are too inter-related, cross-subsidized and have too much communication between their directors to allow any company in the private sector to survive. I do not want to see a fifty-fifty balance of private and public corporations in the marketplace because I believe that would mean too many Crown corporations. The difference between private and public corporations is that a private corporation cannot survive without a bottom line.

It is interesting to see the advantage that Crown corporations have over major private corporations. For example, I was talking to two employees of Canadian Pacific Airlines. They were telling me that the problem they have competing with the very-well-run national airline, Air Canada, is that Air Canada had its debt cancelled and is therefore operating with an unnatural administrative burden. The private sector corporation, which comes under the taxpaying sector under acceptable accountability, just cannot compete with the lighter burden of the Crown corporation.

What is at stake is freedom in the marketplace. As we move from concentration on ownership in the private sector to allow even more concentration on allowing the state sector to have control over our lives, we lose freedom of choice. When we lose that, we have lost our freedom. All through the ages history has told us that when this happens, power over the people is the objective. I want to see this system survive and I want to see Crown corporations and the public services accountable to the institutions. I believe there should be parliamentary reform which will deliver that accountability.

I urge members on the government side to vote for this amendment and strike from Bill C-102 the phrase, "agency of Her Majesty status". Because that in itself has serious implications. I would also urge those members to develop legal answers which would clear up the confusion which exists between the relationship of a corporation under the Canada Business Corporations Act and one accountable through the Financial Administration Act.

In order to have any kind of accountability, any corporations which are created by the minister should come under the Financial Administration Act. The Canada Business Corporations Act content of Bill C-102 confuses the issue and I suppose it is there deliberately to confuse the issue so that we cannot make inquiries within the time frame and workload that we have as Members of Parliament in this place.

The issue which is raised by this amendment which was introduced by the hon. member from Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe is one of the most serious we have had. The minister does not really need these powers provided to him under this bill and I am surprised that we did not catch his ear after all the pleas we made to him in committee about this. If the intent of this bill is that which we were told in committee, the minister does not need the broader powers he is seeking through this legislation. It is a bad bill, the minister does not need it and I would like to see it withdrawn. All the powers he needs are in place today. In my opinion, agency status is an offence to the President of the Treasury Board, who is a former chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and a member who has worked hard on this issue for years.

I plead with hon. members to let us bring ourselves back to the point where we have some accountability to the people. Let us not create a subgovernment that not even we can examine and review. I plead with hon. members opposite to support this amendment so that the bill will at least be 50 per cent improved. It is quite hard to improve compost and rot so perhaps we can empty the bin and get rid of the bill altogether.

I close by saying that Crown corporations do not need these powers and should not be allowed to have their mistakes and debts automatically guaranteed by the Government of Canada. I do not believe that these corporations should be exempt from both provincial and federal laws. Crown corporations should be subject to the same law that private corporations work under. The issue we are concerned about is the authority of the cabinet to set up Crown corporations. We are concerned about the whole subgovernment that is outside the reviewing and accountability process that is being called for by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, by the Auditor General and which the office of the Comptroller General has been attempting to initiate.

I repeat once again that we in the House have no opportunity to examine the mandates given these Crown corporations or to examine the efficiency with which their mandates and objectives are served. There is no control over boards of directors as there is in private sector corporations. If the state is going to be involved in the marketplace, I must ask what is wrong with making Crown corporations subject to the same