

—the most important of these matters . . . has to do with the accountability of corporations owned by the Government of Canada . . . the citizens of Canada have a right to consider themselves the principal shareholders of these organizations; Parliamentarians speak for them. Crown-owned corporations must be held accountable through Parliament.

These organizations have a greater impact on the economy and the life of Canadians than ever before. There are now more people working for crown-owned organizations than there are working in government departments and agencies, when the RCMP and the Armed Forces are excluded. A sub-government has been created to fulfil some of the social and economic aims of government.

The Auditor General has called them a sub-government. But if you believe in our system of parliamentary democracy, where elected representatives of the people control public spending, then these uncontrolled Crown corporations constitute, in effect, a separate country, to whom we send \$30 billion of Canadian money each year, but over which the people of Canada have virtually no control.

We are all aware of the sickening individual abuses by some of these Crown corporations. For example, when Petro-Canada pays roughly double what it should for Petrofina and individual Canadians pay the difference at the gas pump, or when parts of BP are bought for \$400 million more than was first reported — both transactions being outside the mandate Parliament gave to that Crown corporation — it was doing something Parliament did not authorize it to do and it is doing it in an inexcusable and extravagant way.

Those are the abuses, but I am not going to read a list of abuses because I want to deal with the principles of this. Those are just peaks on the horizon of the uncontrolled, subsidized, separate country that we have let Crown corporations become. That separate country of Crown corporations spends \$30 billion each year. That is a larger annual budget than Spain, a larger annual budget than Greece, a larger annual budget than Austria, a larger annual budget than Finland, a larger annual budget than Ireland and a larger annual budget than Switzerland. Yet those real nations all have governments which let their people exercise some control over their spending. Canada's Crown corporations, spending Canada's money, simply ignore that democratic requirement. Their relation to the people is exclusively to spend the people's money. They operate outside democracy. They have, and they exercise, more arbitrary, uncontrolled power than the countries of Switzerland, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Finland, Austria and several others.

The Liberal Government, which is the architect of separatism in the Province of Quebec, pretends to worry that Quebec will remove itself beyond the jurisdiction of Canada. Quebec's budget last year was slightly more than \$20 billion. The budget of that already separate country called Crown corporations was \$30 billion, and there is literally no limit on the size to which that spending can grow—literally no limit at all. The Liberal Government has deliberately, not by accident but deliberately, used its power to allow the creation of unlimited Crown corporations—unlimited additions to this expensive, subsidized, separate country that operates beyond the control of Canada's Parliament and Canada's elected representatives.

Supply

[Translation]

We do not know how many millions of dollars have been wasted by Crown corporations. In one case, the Auditor General pointed out, and I quote:

We have not yet been able to assess whether the \$1.7 billion invested by the Government of Canada for the purchase of the shares of Canadian Petrofina Inc. was expended with due regard to economy.

In another case, referring to Letters of Comfort, he commented as follows, and I quote:

In the last six years, more than a billion dollars has been advanced to Canada through a sequence of Letters of Comfort . . . The authorized limit is \$1.35 billion. This amount of taxpayers' money is at risk without what I would consider clear criteria and objectives for providing, continuing, or terminating support.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's testimony is clear. He is saying that \$1.35 billion are, and I quote:

—at risk.

[English]

The price for BP turns out to be at least \$400 million more than first reported. That is nearly \$2 billion covering just two agencies. That money is gone; it was allowed to drift away by the Government. Yet senior citizens are forced to cut back \$290 each, and the Government says it cannot find money to create jobs.

The Auditor General put it well when he said:

There are more than 300 of these corporations, including subsidiaries, employing some 263,000 Canadians. Revenues of Crown corporations in the most recent fiscal year were \$31.9 billion, and expenses were \$33.6 billion. Most of these corporations are virtually unknown even to the best informed members of the taxpaying public. Yet, in the aggregate, they represent a hole in the taxpayers' pocket, resulting, as they often do, in a consistent negative return on investment.

That is the hole in the pocket—the hundreds of millions of dollars that are taken from pensioners, that are taken from small businessmen in taxes, that are taken from Canadians who buy gas at the pumps, and the money given to unaccountable Crown corporations to waste as they will. If that money were being properly used, it could create jobs in Canada, it could create growth in Canada and it could create hope in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Clark: That is actual money, actual dollars and cents, being wasted at the same time as the Government comes before the House and seeks permission to pick the pockets of Canadian pensioners in the amount of \$290 over the next two years. It wastes \$2 billion on two Crown agencies and it picks the pockets of Canadian pensioners.

Let me put this in the broader context of what it does to confidence, what it does to our ability to attract investment, to create jobs and to create growth in the country. This kind of situation sends a very clear signal to investors here and around the world.

Not only do we have a massive deficit which the Government admits exists, although it is never really sure how large the deficit is, but the Government's carelessness about Crown