

Financial Administration Act

ministers who are able to save their Departments a considerable amount of money? I know that deputy ministers are not the most underpaid section of the bureaucracy because most of them get a hell of a lot more than Members of Parliament, and I doubt if they put in the hours that Members of Parliament do. Instead of doing what we know these deputy ministers have done in the past, that is, scurry around in the month of March trying to find places to spend money, to spend any unused portion of their budgets so they can go back to the Treasury Board for the same amount of money or even more the following year, if they were paid bonuses if they could save X-million dollars a year, that would be a positive step. I would not be adverse to giving a deputy minister a bonus of \$100,000 if he could save the tax payer \$1 million. This is something to which we could give consideration. It is certainly a suggestion I hope the next government will take when it comes to power, whether in three months or six months. I know the Government can hang on almost another year. That decision, as you are aware, Mr. Speaker, remains in the hands of the Prime Minister, whoever he or she may be within the next year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): There follows a ten minute period for questions or comments.

If there are no questions or comments, we will continue with debate. The Hon. Member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro).

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, this Bill is so faulty, so full of defects, that I scarcely know where to begin my criticism of it. I am really astounded that the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) should bring forth a Bill which has so many faults in it. There are faults in basic concept. There are faults in translation, which I shall mention as I go along, or perhaps if they are not faults in translation, they are at least attempts to rewrite either the English or the French language, and I am not sure which it is. But so faulty is the Bill that I suppose the best way to get at it is to start at the beginning of the Bill, look at it and see where it seems to be going. I hope the criticisms that I will be able to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, and to the attention of the President of the Treasury Board will be sufficiently cogent to persuade him that the Bill needs to be withdrawn.

First, I look at the front page of Bill C-24 and I see that in the English version it is called an Act to amend the Financial Administration Act in relation to Crown Corporations. The French version reads:

● (1600)

Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration financière à l'égard des sociétés d'État—

[Translation]

It therefore seems that Crown Corporations—

[English]

—as they used to be called, have now become “des sociétés d'État.” This is exactly the way it was being introduced in the

statement by the hon. President of the Treasury Board in March when the Bill was being brought forward. His introductory comments referred to the control and accountability of Crown corporations.

I would like to quote the first paragraph of that statement wherein the Minister indicated that the federal Government believed that new measures were required to strengthen the control and accountability of its Crown corporations. He indicated that this could best be done by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of Parliament, the Government, the boards of directors and the managers of Crown corporations. The whole focus of that opening paragraph was on Crown corporations. What did he do? He brought forward Bill C-24 amending the Financial Administration Act.

I wonder whether the President of the Treasury Board even bothered to look at Bill C-27, which was introduced in the previous Parliament, a Bill to establish the legitimacy of Crown corporations within the Government structure, the means of controlling them, the means of ensuring their accountability and, in addition—and this is one of the greatest defects in this legislation—the means of ensuring that if their job is done they disappear, or sunset laws. There is not even a notion of a sunset law in these particular amendments to the Financial Administration Act relating to Crown corporations. Is that assuming that all Crown corporations which have come into existence deserve to remain in existence? Is there not some provision that the Government could make or ought to make to assure itself that once the functions of a Crown corporation have been satisfactorily concluded or fulfilled, it ceases to exist as a Crown corporation? There is no such notion whatsoever in this Bill of some 140 to 150 pages and all its appendices; it has at least 156 pages of text.

This particular approach strikes me as being not only unusual but an insult to Parliament and to the Canadian people. There are so many Crown corporations in existence—and probably a good many more in the mind of the Government—that they deserve a statute of their own on which to stand or to fall, a statute which could look after the entire structure of Crown corporations and certainly ensure that once they have fulfilled their functions they will be withdrawn. The concept of approaching control and accountability of Crown corporations through amendments to the Financial Administration Act is a defective one. On those grounds alone this particular legislation deserves to be withdrawn.

I will have occasion to contrast portions of this Bill with Bill C-27 from the Thirty-First Parliament. There was a Bill which dealt exclusively and positively with Crown corporations. It is one which ought to have been a model for the Government to follow in bringing forward legislation purporting to do no more than deal with the control and accountability of Crown corporations.

I said that I would start at the beginning, and perhaps that is a good place to start. Having looked at the title page, I will deal with some of the definitions which are provided. Even there I find either defects, faults or attempts to rewrite either the English or the French language. In English the title of the