

The Economy

before the House of Commons forthwith after receipt thereof by him or, if that House is not then sitting, on the first day next thereafter that the House of Commons is sitting.

10. In reviewing a Federal Body a committee may
- (a) consider the Auditor General's report referred to in Section 9;
 - (b) receive and consider written representations from the public;
 - (c) conduct public hearings; or
 - (d) receive reports and recommendations from officials of the Federal Body under review.

Part IV

Effect of
Termination

11. Where a Federal Body is terminated pursuant to this Act no payment shall be made out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for the purpose of operating such a body, and the Governor General shall not sign a warrant prepared on the order of the Governor in Council pursuant to Section 21 of the Financial Administration Act.

12. When a Federal Body terminates pursuant to this Act it shall be afforded a reasonable period of time to conclude its operations and to wind up its affairs.

13. (1) The termination of a Federal Body pursuant to this Act shall not in any way abrogate, abridge or diminish the right of a person to any legal remedy to which he may be entitled.

(2) This Act is binding on Her Majesty in the right of Canada.

Commence-
ment

14. This Act shall come into force on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

The course which I have followed today is somewhat unusual. Since coming to the Chamber, I cannot remember an occasion where a private member, backbencher or opposition member, read the contents of a proposed bill which his party hoped to put forward in a very positive and real fashion so that it would be considered before the House.

The review process must take place in the House of Commons, rather than in an existing or yet to be established agency. The main purpose is to force parliament to re-examine its past decision-making and reaffirm its priorities. This is the job of politicians, not public servants. It has been suggested that the review process take place within standing committees, and that the decision to extend the life of an agency be made by a positive resolution of the House.

There may be some confusion as to exactly what "sunset" legislation is all about. The fact that 20 or 40 government agencies may be scheduled for termination over the next eight years in no way implies that these agencies will be terminated or that they are not useful. It is only the mechanism to ensure that the goals and activities of these agencies are in fact re-evaluated by politicians in light of the needs, ambitions, hopes and priorities of Canadians. Pressure groups need to be made aware that "sunset" legislation probably will help them in their function and will in fact act in their best interests, as it will give them an opportunity on a regular basis to review and update the departments and agencies they support.

Government complexity and unaccountability has become an increasingly critical problem. Basic questions about the relationship between people and their government need to be asked, and "sunset" legislation provides a practical step which could result in one promising answer. I commend it to hon. members in the hope, at the end of the debate later this evening, the government might see fit to support this matter as

[Mr. Forrester.]

a practical measure, or at least refer it to the appropriate standing committee in order for it to receive the type of in-House examination such a proposal demands. As well, I commend it to individual groups outside of parliament, and I commend it to the House.

I congratulate my leader for the foresight and concern he displayed in proposing this motion not only to the House but, more important, to the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thomas H. Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the speeches made by the hon. members who have preceded me. The motion put forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) is far-reaching. I will confine my remarks to the section which deals with Crown corporations.

The Crown corporations which are in existence were established to satisfy needs in our society, things which are highly desirable but would not be undertaken by the private sector at all or to the extent required by Canadians. I expect it would be difficult to interest someone in the private sector in acquiring some of these corporations which, because of special requirements, such as the provision of broadcasting services in isolated areas by the CBC, require financing by the government. Likewise, the Canadian public may not be prepared to see the profitable ones turned over to the private sector, especially if this affected the level or universality of service provided.

Surely the opposition is not suggesting that we should be discontinuing such Crown corporations as the Export Development Corporation, which is a vital component in the development of our economy; the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which was referred to by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) and which is in the business of providing accommodation to our lower income population, the aged and others; or the Farm Credit Corporation, which is assisting our agricultural community to produce the necessary food and other items so vital to our well-being.

Surely the proper perspective on Crown corporations would be to continue to create, modify, or dispose of them in relation to the needs of the Canadian people. They are not and have not been created for their own sake, nor should they be altered or eliminated capriciously. An example of sound reasoning for the creation of corporations was the acquisition of several aircraft companies, notably Canadair and de Havilland, for the purpose of rationalizing the Canadian aircraft industry. I am sure the opposition would not quarrel with this type of action which was required for the economy and to protect the Canadian aircraft industry. It is still the intention that these revert to the private sector once they have been completely rationalized.

● (1722)

The government is always reviewing these operations, and in this connection may I point out that during the past few years it has reviewed the need for corporations, their direction and control, as well as their accountability. When completed, this