

Financial Administration Act

ies. It has been through these subsidiaries that the greatest proliferation has taken place. Therefore, it seems to me that the Government has side-stepped the opportunity and the responsibility to call a halt to the multiplicity of organizations that are set up, many of which compete against private industry in various sectors of the economy.

There is a fear that Bill C-24 could be interpreted to indicate that Ministers of the Crown may not be bound by its prohibition on the creation of parent corporations. As has been pointed out, Section 16 of the Interpretation Act indicates that no statute binds the Crown unless the statute specifically states that it is applicable to the Crown. It seems there is no clause in this Bill which expressly does this.

There are a great many serious weaknesses in the Bill before us. These have been pointed out in very clear terms. For instance, under the terms of Bill C-24, the so-called board of directors would be little more than an advisory agency, while the Cabinet would direct the affairs of the corporation by, as indicated by the Hon. Member for Calgary South (Mr. Thomson) in his address on the Bill, appointing the auditor, approving by-laws and even making by-laws for the board, setting dividend policy and directing the board on the conduct of the corporation's business and affairs.

On different occasions my Leader has set out a very clear statement of policy in regard to Crown corporations. I regret there is not time to place them all on the record today. However, they have been propounded, explained and stated in various parts of the country. The basic principles as outlined by my Leader would do much to improve the situation as far as Crown corporations are concerned. They would bring to the people a sense of confidence, knowing that under these policies and under these principles Crown corporations, which have been a law unto themselves and have drawn so heavily upon the purses of the people, will finally be responsible and accountable, not just to the Government but to the House of Commons.

● (1640)

Mr. John Evans (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I spoke in the debate earlier and I shall now speak to this amendment.

We have had eight full days of debate on Bill C-24, with 28 hours of debate during those eight days. We have heard from approximately 120 speakers on this particular Bill. We now find that the opposition still wants to put up more and more speakers to delay consideration of this Bill in committee.

Many of the issues raised by the opposition are issues that are rightfully dealt with by a Standing Committee where witnesses can be called, where the Bill can be scrutinized clause by clause and where individual issues can be dealt with in depth. However, the opposition refuses to let the Bill go to committee; rather, opposition Members wish to put up speaker after speaker.

Unfortunately, I must indicate that most of those speakers do not have a clue as to what they are talking about. In many cases, opposition Members have had speeches drafted for them

by others and they have parroted those words verbatim. Those speeches have been full of mistakes and errors.

Not 15 minutes ago, we heard the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell) say that there are now 400 to 500 Crown corporations and that the number is growing by the day. About two weeks ago on May 8, Mr. Speaker, every Member of Parliament received a document entitled *Crown Corporations and Other Canadian Government Corporate Interests*. That document lists them all, Mr. Speaker. It lists parent corporations, subsidiaries, joint ventures and all of the corporate interests and Crown corporations of the Government of Canada.

This is the fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker. The number of parent Crown corporations, the kind of corporations of which Hon. Members opposite are so deathly afraid, does not add up to 400 to 500, 300 to 400 or 100 to 200. In fact, there are 67 such Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker. There are not 400 to 500 subsidiaries of parent Crown corporations. There are in fact 128 of them. The total number of parent corporations and wholly owned subsidiaries is 195, not 400 to 500; not some unknown number. The number is known and it is listed right here. Every Member of Parliament has had this document for over two weeks. The problem is that opposition Members do not take the time to read the documents they receive that are relevant to the debate that is going on in the House of Commons.

Let us talk about the numbers of subsidiary corporations of which the Crown owns less than 100 per cent; in other words, Crown corporations in which the Crown participates with some other agency or entity in the ownership. These corporations must be dealt with in a different fashion from wholly owned Crown corporations, must be dealt with in a somewhat more confidential manner as far as reporting goes because private interests as well as public interests are involved. That makes sense, Mr. Speaker, and the Bill provides for that. There are 30 such corporations of which the Crown owns more than 50 per cent and less than 100 per cent.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there are associate corporations. For example, Petro-Canada may enter into a joint venture with another corporation to develop an offshore well. In these cases, the Crown owns less than 50 per cent of the corporation and is a minority shareholder. There are 64 such corporations. There are 18 joint and mixed enterprises, Mr. Speaker. There are 195 Crown corporations in the sense most people know of them owned entirely by the Crown. There are an additional 112 other interests that the Crown owns through its Crown corporations or by other means, along with businesses, enterprises or other forms of agencies in Canada.

It is time that we come to a decision on this Bill at second reading stage. My gosh, we are not talking about third reading stage and we are not talking about making the Bill law. We are talking about passing in principle the notion that Crown corporations should be under greater control and should be more accountable. We are sending this Bill to committee so that we can look at its individual provisions. It is long since past the time for this House to come to a decision on Bill C-24.