

Development Investment Corporations Act

this Bill is designed to regularize the incorporation of CDIC retroactively, making legal the illegal transfer of shares of Eldorado Nuclear and the CDC and granting responsibility for Teleglobe Canada to CDIC. The earlier transfer of those shares contravene both the intent of Parliament and the then existing legislation. The CDIC was set up illegally by this Government, which would now have us grant after the fact approval to this earlier illegal action.

The Minister responsible for this Bill has made much of it as a tool of management and divestiture, and downplays its role as a tool of investment. In other words, he downplays the fact that this Government wants to intervene more in commercial activity. Yet, on the other hand, both the chairman, Maurice Strong and the president, Joel Bell, of CDIC have publicly taken the complete opposite tack. They do not talk about divestiture; they have not mentioned it yet. Those two officials proudly enforce the view that the Government alone can respond to new economic challenges. They endorse the view that the appropriate response to those challenges is greater and more direct Government involvement.

Under Bill C-25, the CDIC gets a wide mandate, excessively wide in the view of this Party. I want to go on record as saying the Progressive Conservative Party is not against Crown corporations per se. We agree there is a role for Crown corporations. This Party was associated with the setting up of a number of Crown corporations many decades ago. In a country so wide and diversified as Canada and with so little population, sometimes there is the necessity for a Crown corporation to play a role. But it is the last choice. We would prefer the public sector pick up and do the work through companies listed on stock exchanges and so on.

The articles of incorporation of CDIC do not list any restrictions on the business it may carry on. When we look at the illegal Order in Council which set up this corporation, we find it speaks of investing, assisting, expanding, widening and carrying out all activities in the best interests of Canada operating in a commercial manner. All activities. It does not mention divesting. We can only assume, therefore, that the Minister and the Cabinet, in talking about divestiture, are trying to pull a little ploy for public consumption while they hide their real intent. Make no mistake about it; both the present Government and present management of CDIC view the role of CDIC as that of economic intrusion under an exceedingly vague mandate. It is vague precisely so it can be used to serve essentially political goals and write blank cheques; so it can be used to duplicate all the past disasters of Crown corporations, meddling in what should be strictly commercial matters. Yet the Government would have us believe at the same time that Bill C-24, the companion legislation, will clear-up some of these problems. There is no clear, precise definition of the mandate or the objectives of CDIC anywhere. We know from past experience with this Government what that state of affairs leads to. It leads to disaster.

The Government has taken hold of a new catch-phrase, that of accountability. We on the Opposition side of the House, for the time being, have been talking about accountability for

almost ten years. For us it is not some mere catch-phrase. For us it is not designed as part of a public relations scam. For the Progressive Conservative Party, accountability is a commitment. What does Bill C-25 tell us about the depth of the Government's commitment? Under Clause 41, CDIC will be pointedly free or exempt from Section 24 to 26 of the Statutory Instruments Act with respect to any directives or orders made under Bill C-25. In other words, CDIC will be exempt from the provisions for public access to such statutory instruments. Why? The Government is trying to hide things again. The public can neither copy nor take away copies of such orders and directives. There is no permanent reference of such directives and orders to any of the standing committees of Parliament, whereas in the case of all other statutes, regulations and directives, they are all referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments. In other words, Mr. Speaker, they have excluded CDIC from some fairly heavy and what could be onerous provisions but which are important for a company playing around with our tax dollars. So much for accountability. So much for public responsibility.

We are told that Bill C-24 is designed to enhance the control, direction and accountability of Crown corporations. We are told it is going to be the grand solution, the framework on which the future of public corporations will be made to adhere, and the framework which will clear up all that has gone wrong in the past. It is of such value to the interests of greater control, direction and accountability that in Bill C-25, introduced at precisely the same time as Bill C-24, we find that on at least six occasions the CDIC is either exempt from the application of Bill C-24 or the Cabinet is pointedly authorized to allow such exemptions. We need look no further than Bill C-25 to see the illusion of the present Government's commitment to accountability.

● (1620)

Last year, Bill C-158, the predecessor to Bill C-25 which we are discussing today, provided that Parliament would have seen the complete capital budgets of the CDIC after approval by Cabinet. One year later, this regime has decided that only summaries of corporate plans and capital budgets of the CDIC will be tabled. The Bill has been watered down already.

Under this Bill, Parliamentary approval will be required for CDIC to acquire new wholly-owned subsidiaries but, in the same breath, Cabinet is given an override on that requirement. Clause 41 waives the requirement to table before Parliament any information that the Minister feels would be detrimental to the commercial interests of either CDIC or any of its wholly-owned subsidiaries. These are major loopholes.

Let us not ignore the fact that under this Bill, CDIC has a \$3 billion debt limit which includes the borrowings of subsidiary corporations. The CDIC is allowed to raise \$3 billion in the form of debt and it will never have to come back to Parliament to ask for permission to do so. Some accountability that is. Aggregate payments of up to \$1 billion from the Consolidated Revenue Fund can be authorized by Cabinet.