

*Private Members' Business*

corporations from part X of the Financial Administration Act which sets out a generic accountability regime for crown corporations. These five agencies are the Canada Council, the National Arts Centre Corporation, the International Development Research Centre, Telefilm Canada, and the Canadian Wheat Board.

There are a number of problems with this bill. In attempting to convert the employees of the three exempt crown corporations to public servants, there is the possibility that these employees would come under the workforce adjustment policy. When we consider the overall efforts of this government to downsize, this seems to be an unnecessary complication. It would add approximately 800 more civil servants if this bill were to pass.

I will pick specifically the International Development Research Centre. At the time Bill C-24 was proposed back in March 1984 this matter was raised as a question in the House by the then member for Capilano. A response was given by the then Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

The enabling legislation passed in the early 1960s allows up to 21 governors of the IDRC, which include the chairman and the vice-president, to be non-Canadian citizens and nationals of other countries. The purpose was to promote a research centre on north-south issues by way of example which would follow Canada's lead in the area of international development.

At the time Bill C-24 was before the House it was intended that the IDRC remain independent of the policy direction of the Government of Canada. For this reason it was named in clause 85(1) of the bill as an exempt crown corporation.

This effort by the hon. member from the Reform Party would attempt to turn the clock back. While we can applaud some of the positive features of the member's proposed bill, the overall effect would be negative.

There are other elements of Bill C-263 which trouble me. These are the consequential amendments to other legislation in the bill to make the officers and employees of the Canada Council, the Canadian Film Development Corporation, or Telefilm Canada as it has come to be known, and the National Arts Centre Corporation to be part of the Public Service of Canada. Frankly, recent experience suggests that this is taking measures in the wrong direction.

I am reminded of the trials and tribulations of the Government of New Zealand in the early 1980s with its massive debt and deficit situation. Drastic measures were proposed in a number of areas to deal with that awesome challenge.

One initiative was a complete restructuring of the New Zealand public service from the way deputy ministers are

appointed and held accountable to the decentralization of departments. Sufficient time has now elapsed from the initial turnaround efforts to allow a dispassionate assessment of the measures put in place. There is a wide consensus now in New Zealand and among knowledgeable observers of public administration in many western countries respecting one very beneficial element of that initiative by the New Zealand government.

I refer to the introduction of legislation to make each department of government a separate employer under the collective bargaining regime established for the public service. This single measure is given credit for a major element of the success of the reform package. It has allowed individual managers to tailor the workforce to the specific mandate of each revamped agency and significantly reduced the inertia and rigidity in the service. If anything we ought perhaps to be exploring the merits of establishing more separate employers, not fewer.

While New Zealand no doubt had very difficult choices to deal with, I think most members would agree that Canada as well has significant debt and deficit challenges on its agenda. The effort by New Zealand to deal with the matter is a clear demonstration that the government's intention to achieve more flexibility in the management of its affairs is the way to go. Attempting to bring these agencies and their workers within the general purview of the government flies in the face of our attempts to downsize, to improve efficiencies and to do a better job with the resources Canadians give us through taxes on their hard won labours. It requires that we be responsible with those resources.

• (1145)

Introducing greater rigidity into the system as the bill is proposing would seem to be the wrong policy instrument for our present ills. No doubt the intention of the hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt is to enhance the efficiency of these crown corporations. In this respect I suspect the opposite effect will be achieved.

The hon. member's proposals to integrate the employees of these agencies into the monolithic structure of the federal public service would unravel a very delicate compromise achieved between the government and the cultural communities over 10 years ago with the passage of Bill C-24.

These organizations have developed their strengths by cultivating their distinct corporate cultures over the last few decades. The erosion of those identities by declaring the officers and employees part of the public service would at best be unfortunate. I suggest it would be a backward step.

It risks undermining the longstanding confidence they enjoy from their partners and clients in such practices as peer evalua-