

Energy, Mines and Resources

In short, we are asking the government from this side of the House, from the official opposition, to draw back and reconsider. The government does not need the bill now before us. The government does not need the power to create more and more Crown corporations. The government has demonstrated well that it does not know how to run the Crown corporations under its jurisdiction now. Let me give one example of that. When we were in power, we had an opportunity to review in depth the internal operation of a company called Canadair. Canadair was acquired in 1974 by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) through another government. In 1974 the House was told the acquisition was only a temporary transition. The government wanted to pick up Canadair with the hope that it could get the corporation back into the private sector without delay. But when we had an opportunity to take a look at this matter, we found that it was reasonable to expect, judging from what management told us in 1979, that Canadair's total exposure to a debt and equity commitment from the Government of Canada would be about a \$200 million item, and that in any event most of the debt would be paid off by 1982. Canadair then would be in an earnings position, having about \$38 million per annum profit starting in 1982 which would increase thereafter. That is what we were told less than three years ago. We now find through miscalculation, mistakes and error, that the total government exposure with respect to Canadair is not \$200 million but \$1.35 billion. What a colossal miscalculation! Instead of that corporation being in a profitable position at present, we are told very frankly that if the government had not capitalized the various items it chose to capitalize, there would have been a loss of \$140 million. That is government in action. That is the government which made a former colleague and minister, Jean-Pierre Goyer, vice-chairman of that corporation. That is the patronage and pork-barrelling to which I have referred in which this government loves to engage when it gets entities at its disposal.

Tragically it is your money, Mr. Speaker, it is our money and it is the money of the average Canadian which the government is earmarking for this type of activity. Someone in the House sometime down the road will have a colossal mess to clean up as a result of the reckless, irresponsible, poorly managed commercial activities of this government if this bill now before us is passed.

We are virtually giving the government a blank cheque to create more of this activity in future with even less control by the people of Canada through the good offices of the House of Commons. Surely it is time for members to say they have had enough. Let us stop the minister right now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (1600)

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make it very clear from the beginning that this party will vote against Bill C-102 for a wide number of reasons, although not the same reasons as outlined by the hon. member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens). I would like to start with two of the rather important and startling principles which the minister has introduced in this piece of legislation.

The first is the creation of Crown corporations by order in council. What can happen is that five members of cabinet can get together late one night and have researchers and members of various departments write up some background papers on a Crown corporation. The five of them can pass the order in council, it will come in and be put on the notice paper and it might say: Gopher Gulch Crown Corporation. It might seem innocuous to those of us in the House, but we have a limited period of time in which to respond. If 30 members of the House sign a motion to the effect that the order be revoked, then we have a negative resolution which will come before the House for a maximum three hour debate. The really peculiar thing, which was touched on by the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Beatty) last night, is that after the three hour debate, even if every member of this chamber voted against it, it could still become law. What could happen is that it would go over to the other place; and if they do not concur in the negative resolution, it becomes law. I think all members of the House should be aware of this because it is a crucially new and unique way of abusing the House of Commons. Clause 8 of the bill says:

Where a motion taken up and considered in accordance with this section is not adopted by the House in which it was introduced . . . but is not concurred in by the other House, the particular order to which the motion relates comes into force immediately . . .

I find it astonishing, Mr. Speaker, to see the minister put this kind of legislation before the House, legislation which will completely override the concept of democracy. Even if every member of the minister's own party voted against it, it can still become law. How can we possibly represent not only the partisan interests of our own party but the interests of Canadians when the only chamber in Canada whose members are elected from all regions can vote against something and it still becomes law? I find that extremely peculiar, and I will come back to it later this afternoon.

Mr. Riis: It makes a mockery of Parliament.

Mr. Fulton: It definitely makes a mockery of Parliament. The second point also makes a mockery of Parliament because it is a negative resolution—even with all the fancy sounding sections referring to 30 members signing, and the minister changed it from 50 last night to 30, and from 20 in the Senate to 15 and so on—with time restraints, and has a mandatory guillotine in it. Therefore, rather than reforming this institution, about which we had eloquent speeches from all parties a couple of weeks ago, we have the minister introducing a bill which slides completely around Parliament. Regardless of Parliament's view, the most we will have is three hours on the floor. Even if we were all to vote against it, in comes the guillotine and it becomes law.

Those two principles alone, Mr. Speaker, should shock every member of the House who has any concept of democracy. We are faced with the possibility of having to vote for something which does so much to undo the very constitutional foundation of this country.

Mr. Riis: Hear, hear!