

Mr. Flis: I just had experience of the Northern Transportation Corporation. The Government is putting it up for sale because it is no longer needed to meet the national interests of Canada. This Bill allows for a sale of that kind, the disposal of a Crown corporation.

● (1610)

How can members of the Official Opposition be against a Bill which by statute will subject Crown corporations to a rigorous audit regime which not only meets but exceeds that normally applied to private sector corporations? How can they be against a Bill which by statute ensures that Parliament will be informed of the objectives of Crown corporations as set out in their annual corporate plans as approved by the Government? How can they be against a Bill which by statute ensures that Parliament will have a systematic flow of timely, pertinent information so that it can judge whether Crown corporations have met their stated objectives for each planning period? How can they rise and be against a Bill which by statute makes the Government responsible for the strategic and budgetary decisions of all parent Crown corporations and through them their wholly-owned subsidiaries? Any directive issued by the Government will be tabled in Parliament. Does accountability not rest with us in the House? If it does not, we are not fulfilling our responsibilities as Members of Parliament.

I was pleased that the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo) defined accountability for us. Sometimes we forget what it means. If this legislation goes through, hopefully before the House recesses for the summer, the board of directors will be more accountable; government, whoever is in power, will be more accountable; and the House which accounts for every penny of the taxpayers will be more accountable.

I notice, Mr. Speaker, you are indicating that it is time for me to wrap up my remarks. I want to stress again that we are not debating the Bill at this point. We are debating the motion of the President of the Treasury Board. He is not stopping or limiting debate. He is saying that we want to debate this Bill further in committee where we can hear the amendments of the New Democratic Party, the Official Opposition and Hon. Members on this side of the House. Then we could bring the Bill back to the House. Are they against that parliamentary process?

It is one thing to debate, but it is another to stall. After the first 10 speakers, 55 speakers were put up to stall debate. That is not what we are elected to do. That is not what the people sitting in the galleries, who pay our salaries, send us here to do. They send us here to participate in meaningful debate, to pass good legislation. Hon. Members opposite are afraid that if we pass this piece of legislation, the Government will look good and the Official Opposition will look bad.

Mr. John Gamble (York North): Mr. Speaker, the last speaker for the Government clearly indicated our task today. We are debating a motion of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) to gag the House. I do not care what the

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Hon. Member for Parkdale-High Park (Mr. Flis) calls it; it has the effect of terminating debate in this place to which we are sent to represent our constituents.

I understand the theory of the herd mentality expressed by that Hon. Member. He indicated that 66 Conservatives had already spoken on this Bill and that there could not be anything of any significance which anyone else would care to add. I resent the suggestion that individual Members of the House, including myself—and I have not spoken on this Bill—do not have something valuable to contribute. If we do not, at least we have the right to exercise our privileges as Members of the House to express our views in this place. I shall do that regardless of the urgings of the Hon. Member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr. Pinard: You can do that in committee.

Mr. Gamble: Now we are told by the Government House Leader where to do it. Of course, he would prefer that we do it in some place which is not public.

Mr. Pinard: The committee is public.

Mr. Gamble: I understand the Liberal Party wanting to practise politics in a closet, but that is not the position of my Party.

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Hon. Member is leading the Canadian public astray by saying that committees are not open to the public. Committees are open to the public.

Mr. Pinard: Right on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order, please. If an Hon. Member has a point of order, he must refer specifically to "Point of Order" in the little book.

Mr. Gamble: I might have said that had the Hon. Member for Parkdale-High Park spent more time in the House, he might understand the rules. However, I doubt that he will have that opportunity for very long.

I should like to deal with the features of this Bill which I quite frankly find offensive. This Bill was not designed, as it would lead us to believe by the provisions of Clause 1 thereof, to control Crown corporations. Rather, it was designed to create the skeleton on which, by regulation, the government of the day will determine all significant portions of the law as it applies to Crown corporations. Later I will refer at some length to the specific clauses in the Bill which deal with this matter in a very direct and improper fashion.

I am curious as to why the Government is so anxious to press forward with this piece of legislation. It is obvious to the Liberal administration that it is most appropriate to extend as far as possible the inroads of Crown corporation activities into the responsible functions to be performed by government itself. If perchance it can "Crown corporationize" every government department, the functions of the Ministers sitting in the front row of government benches will be reduced to performing no