

*Financial Administration Act*

time in committee attempting to work out the apparent problems, and to try to make the rules very similar for both kinds of corporations.

In passing, I think I would be remiss if I did not point out that the publicly traded corporations also have problems with regard to shareholder information. I am sure the shareholders of Dome Petroleum did not know how much trouble Dome was in until after the fact, just as this House acting on behalf of the Canadian shareholders did not know how much trouble Canadair and de Havilland were in until after the fact. It works both ways, Mr. Speaker.

When we study the Bill for the next six months, as I hope we will be able to, I hope those facts will be remembered and considered when methodologies are being worked out for Crown corporations.

It has been mentioned a number of times that the functions we require Crown corporations to perform vary sometimes. Crown corporations are set up to augment our cultural diversity. We have the Canada Council, for instance. We have been attempting to increase the Canadian content of our theatre and performing arts. We have established a movie industry through the National Film Board. We have the CBC. Originally, these corporations were set up, not to make a profit or to perform a commercial service but to be an extension of the cultural life of this country and to augment that cultural heritage.

We do have a number of Crown corporations which are clearly set up to provide an economic service. Those do an excellent job, particularly when they are performing services that we all must use. A Crown corporation has the economic advantage of being able to supply that service without the requirement of charging enough for the service to generate a profit for the shareholders.

● (1630)

The shareholders of Crown corporations, namely the people of Canada, are quite in agreement. They will simply accept good services from Crown corporations; they are not interested in generating great profits. In fact they are attempting to have the services performed at cost, since all of us use the services of those corporations.

It is suitable to study the Bill for an additional six months so that the method of reporting to the House can be clarified and better understood, not only by Members of the House but by members of the public. The role of naming an auditor, which usually rests with shareholders, should be clarified. Members of Parliament have at their disposal the Auditor General of Canada. It has not been made clear in this legislation that the Auditor General can be utilized as our auditor, whether he will be called in or whether he has the option of moving in and conducting comprehensive audits of corporations. This should be made clear to Members of the House and to the public so that we understand what will be the role of Crown corporations in the future.

**Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East):** Mr. Speaker, we are reminded on the first page of Bill C-24 that this is an Act to amend the Financial Administration Act in relation to Crown corporations and to amend other Acts in consequence thereof.

I should like to begin by saying that the arrogance of this Government in dealing with national business is boundless. In applying closure to the debate on Bill C-24 it continues to exhibit, even in its death throes, a complete absence of any appreciation for the rights of Canadians to understand fully the purpose of legislation through the ordinary process of unhampered discussion in the House. At a time when the Government's credibility is practically zero, it seems strange that its Members continue to maintain the attitude, "Well, the Government knows best". This stance has been the Government's hallmark throughout past years.

I believe there is a place for Crown corporations in Canada. This is particularly true when the private sector is either unable or unwilling to co-operate in the implementation of programs to fulfil legitimate government policy. Under such circumstances it is preferable that government enter the field as a competitor rather than in a monopoly position. It appears that the present Government has completely lost the capacity to inspire Canadians to invest in worthwhile investments that would move the nation forward confidently and voluntarily. It pushes forward in a bull-headed and brutal fashion to force through programs which are often misguided and harmful to the economy. Then of course it can draw upon the taxpayers' purse to meet its financial obligations. In my view the role of Government is to administer the affairs of the country in accordance with the will of the people. This is not the course that is being followed by the present Government.

As I think back to the time when I first heard about the details of the measure before us, it appeared that the Government was responding to the demand for some fundamental changes to the way in which it was dealing with the issue of Crown corporations. A closer appraisal of the proposed amendments in Bill C-24, however, showed that the changes at best were illusory. Over the past several years, successive Auditors General have severely reprimanded the Government for neglecting its responsibility by allowing Crown corporations free rein in the conduct of their business, to the extent that they now constitute a sub-government. As I have stated, any seeming improvement through the provisions of Bill C-24 is only a mirage.

Much has been said about the proliferation of Crown corporations. As I listened to the broadcast when the Bill was first introduced and the proposed amendments were outlined, I heard reference that in the future the creation of Crown corporations would require parliamentary approval by means of a special Act. At that time I said to my wife, who was listening to the program as well, that it appeared the Government was finally listening to the criticisms of the Opposition in the House and was now prepared to make some significant changes. However, I was wrong. It appears that parliamentary approval applies only to parent corporations, not to subsidiar-