which it defines as corporations wholly owned by the federal Government. We find that between December, 1982 and March, 1984 the number of corporations wholly owned by the Government of Canada increased from 186 to 195.

I would be prepared to bet that very few Members of the House of Commons could name the nine new Crown corporations if they were asked. Indeed, very few Member of Parliament or very few Canadians could list more than a couple of dozen of the 195 Crown corporations which are in existence at the present time.

In a situation where the Government allows Crown corporations to proliferate with virtually no control, where Members of Parliament are unaware of the existence of many of these Crown corporations, and where we have example after example of extremely poor management, cost overruns and cases where Crown corporations have to return to the public treasury to ask Canadian taxpayers to bail them out, there is something very seriously wrong. One need look no further than at the front page of the business section of today's edition of *The Toronto Star* where one will find the headline "Will Ottawa bail out ailing nuclear firm?" In part the article reads:

> Taxpayers may have to cough up millions to revive Candu reactor and its industry.

It refers to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, another federal Crown corporation which is set to lose literally hundreds of millions of dollars by the time it is through. There is no doubt as to the need for comprehensive legislation to deal with the whole issue of Crown corporations.

The issue before the House today, as the Government tries to cut off debate on this Crown corporations legislation, is whether the Bill does what it is supposed to do. Does it increase parliamentary control? Does it improve management? Does it allow boards of directors of Crown corporations to perform their function?

The answer to those questions is that the Bill does not do what it is alleged to do. For example, in the area of creation, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) leaves the impression with Members of Parliament and with the public that this Bill will plug Parliament back in and ensure that it is consulted before the creation of a Crown corporation. Of course, if a corporation were subsidiary, Parliament would have no role to play.

● (1150)

We will find in the future that there will likely never again be a special Act of incorporation such as there was for Petro-Canada, Air Canada or the CBC which allowed Parliament to debate the essence of a corporation and to set its structure and spell out its mandate. Instead, these companies will be incorporated under the Canada Business Corporations Act and there will be a limited debate in Parliament of seven hours in the House of Commons and seven hours in the Senate, with a brief committee study. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, that undermines Parliament's role rather than strengthens it.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, even that limited procedure for parliamentary control is a bit of a sham because the Government leaves the impression that there would at least be the element of control when creating new parent companies of Parliament being able to look at an Order in Council and debate it in the House for at least seven hours. In fact, there is nothing in this Bill that binds the Crown to that. In fact, the Bill does not change the status quo. A Cabinet Minister of the Government will be able to incorporate new Crown corporations and do so without one minute's parliamentary debate or parliamentary approval.

Dr. Ed Clark, the man in the Treasury Board secretariat who is responsible for Crown corporations policy, told the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants that the Department had in fact received a legal opinion from the Department of Justice which indicated that this Bill was binding on the Crown. In fact, that was totally false. The Government has received no such opinion. If indeed the Government claims that it has received such an opinion, let Dr. Clark or the President of the Treasury Board produce that opinion. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, since that time, Dr. Clark has communicated with the President of the Treasury Board and has denied that he ever made the statement that others witnessed him making, and has indeed confessed that there is no such opinion from the Department of Justice which indicates that this Bill is binding on the Crown.

If the President of the Treasury Board wishes to check the veracity of Dr. Clark's assertion that he in fact never made a comment claiming that there was such a legal opinion, let him ask other people who were at the meeting. They would be prepared to give their point of view and I think it would be a useful test of Dr. Clark's reliability.

Since that time, the Treasury Board has attempted to obtain legal opinions indicating that this would be binding on the Crown and it found that just the opposite was the case. In fact, that provision in this Bill is not binding on the Crown and even the limited procedures for parliamentary control do not apply over the incorporation of new Crown corporations. Business could continue to be done as usual. When we have that sort of sham, an attempt to subvert parliamentary control in the name of promoting parliamentary control, you can see, Mr. Speaker, why we oppose this Bill so strongly.

What about the function of management, Mr. Speaker? What we saw in the cases of Canadair and de Havilland were massive cost overruns, massive public subsidies and a complete failure on the part of the board of directors to do its work. One of the things the Government says it wants to do is beef up the role of boards of directors, yet it would do just the opposite. Cabinet would have the right to choose the chief executive officer and the auditor. Cabinet would even have the right not only to set their salaries but also to write by-laws for Crown corporations. What would be the function of boards of directors in the future other than to collect per diems and create a resting place for defeated Liberal candidates? Surely, Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about promoting parliamentary control and improved management of Crown corporations, then we are entitled to much better legislation than this.