

*Supply—Atomic Energy Control Board*

to set aside the provisions of section 3 of an act of this parliament, namely the Atomic Energy Control Act.

**Mr. Howe:** What provision? Does my hon. friend know?

**Mr. Knowles:** As a matter of fact, I do not know what that section says. I have a great many books under my desk but I do not happen to have that one. Whatever that provision is, I submit that this is not the way to change even a minor provision in an act. It looks as though that is just about the only—

**Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood):** Here is the act.

**An hon. Member:** Your parliamentary assistant!

**Mr. Knowles:** Thanks to my parliamentary assistant, I now have the act before me. I did not see who it was who handed it to me—

**Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood):** It is the first time I was ever able to help you.

**Mr. Knowles:** I thank the hon. member for Greenwood. I felt that tall presence behind me and I thought it was the hon. member for Winnipeg North. At any rate, I can now tell the minister that section 3 of the Atomic Energy Control Act reads as follows:

- (1) There is hereby constituted a body corporate to be called the Atomic Energy Control Board for the purposes hereinafter set out and with powers exercisable by it only as an agent of His Majesty.
- (2) the board may on behalf of His Majesty contract in the name of His Majesty and property acquired by the board is the property of His Majesty and shall be vested in the name of His Majesty except shares in the capital stock of a company which shall be vested in the name of the board in trust for His Majesty.

Before the Minister of Trade and Commerce asks me what that means, may I say to him that whatever it means, the government is asking us to set it aside by the terms of this item 656. May I point out that the item is for the amount of \$1. Obviously the Minister of Finance did not bring that item before us in order to get \$1 out of this parliament. He could pay the dollar himself if that was all that was involved. The dollar item is there for a legislative purpose. I recognize the fact that there are many precedents for this sort of thing; but as I have already pointed out, many of those precedents—in fact, most of them of this type—have been criticized as bad practice by the Auditor General. I do not think that a precedent that has been criticized by the Auditor General should be followed in this instance. If it was necessary to amend the Atomic Energy Control Act, with particular reference to section 3 thereof, in order to pursue the new developments to which the

Minister of Trade and Commerce has referred, I think the government should have brought in a bill to amend that act, rather than do it in this way.

One of the reasons that I took the extra minutes I did in the opening part of my remarks in order to spell out my commendation of the government with respect to what it is doing in the field of atomic energy was to make it clear that I am not critical of that phase of the matter. Without qualification I commend the government for what it is doing in giving aid in pushing development in this field. If I am critical at all, it is not of the Minister of Trade and Commerce—he can sit back in his chair—but it is of the Minister of Finance for changing legislation in this way, by means of a dollar item, instead of doing it in the proper way.

**Mr. Abbott:** As I said before, my hon. friend would have made a good lawyer; but in this case he is completely off. If there is ever a justification for a dollar item—and there are plenty of them, and the Auditor General would be the first to recognize it—this is the case. The Atomic Energy Control Act authorizes the setting up of crown corporations to handle certain of these operations. As the Minister of Trade and Commerce has already said, these valuable assets have been paid for out of moneys voted by parliament. The only purpose of this item in the appropriations is to authorize the transfer of this asset from crown accounting—and they are not carried on anything but the books—to this crown corporation which the Atomic Energy Control Act specifically provides may be set up. This is a statute, of course. But if my hon. friend will go back to what the Auditor General said about dollar items I am sure he will find that this sort of authorization here is not the kind of thing which the Auditor General took exception to. Mind you, with all due respect to him, the Auditor General does not make the law in these matters, and his opinion, while it is entitled to great respect, is the opinion of only one man. But I make the assertion here that this item is a perfectly proper item; that it is proper that it should be down as a dollar, which is the traditional method, because the assets here are not carried as an active asset on our books. If my hon. friend wants my legal opinion, for what it is worth,—

**Mr. Knowles:** The amount of this vote is one dollar.

**Mr. Abbott:**—again I say it is a perfectly proper and appropriate transaction. If there were any question of relevance in the matter, it is even more advisable than the Polymer item, which preceded it.