

Financial Administration

As the minister pointed out, it is proposed that, except for the provisions I have just noted, the crown corporations part of the bill should apply to both agency and proprietary corporations. We are seeking to establish a pattern and to lay the foundation for more uniform and systematic financial relationships between the government and parliament on the one hand and the several classes of crown corporations on the other. In general the legislation is intended to deal with those matters which the present acts do not cover, but in the event that there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this part and any other act, it is specifically provided that the latter prevails.

As I have indicated, it is proposed that the capital budgets of both agency and proprietary corporations, as approved by the governor in council, should be laid before parliament. Agency corporations will also be required to submit their operating budgets for ministerial approval and to undertake their contractual commitments in accordance with conditions prescribed by the governor in council. For both agency and proprietary corporations, provision will be made for meeting emergency working capital requirements, for regulating the establishment of reserves and banking accounts, and the treatment of surplus moneys. The bill will also include provision requiring corporations to keep proper books of account, and to make annual reports to the appropriate minister to be laid before parliament with the corporations' audited financial statements. The auditor will be required to report on the financial affairs of the corporation in terms specified in the bill—terms, I might say, which are somewhat more stringent than the present Companies Act requirements. As the minister pointed out last session it is also proposed to qualify the Auditor General to act as the auditor or a joint auditor of a crown corporation in any case in which he is not now eligible for appointment.

I think, Mr. Speaker, I have referred to most of the significant aspects of the bill. There are other proposed provisions relating to the transfer of crown property, placing the government officers guarantee fund on a statutory basis, the recovery of debts due to the crown, the authorization of remissions, civil liabilities and offences and certain other matters, but I would suggest that it is more fitting that these should be explained in detail in committee. A number of existing statutes will be repealed and these are listed in a schedule to the bill.

The bill will provide more efficient procedures for the regulation and control of the financial transactions of the government and

[Mr. Sinclair.]

for the management of public stores and property. It will lay the foundation for a more satisfactory relationship between the government and parliament on the one hand, and corporations on the other. In so doing, it will enable parliament to receive a fuller accounting of the way in which public moneys have been received and spent.

Mr. E. D. Fulton (Kamloops): Mr. Speaker, the subject matter of the resolution before the house is probably one of the most important that can come before any parliament, dealing as it does with the question of the efficient handling of public funds. Because, after all, it is almost a self-evident fact that nothing is of such importance to a nation, in the realm of everyday affairs at any rate, as what happens to the money a government takes from the people, how much it takes, and what it does with that money when it takes it under its control. Unfortunately, however, though one of the most important matters that can ever come before a parliament, this same subject matter is perhaps one of the driest and, unfortunately, the most complicated and technical. We always seem to get into dull and technical discussions when dealing with affairs of this kind.

I am sure the house will understand and agree when I say that in the light of those facts and the very general—and quite properly general—review given by the parliamentary assistant by way of introduction to the resolution, no comments in detail upon the contents of the proposed measure either should or could be made at this time. The detail can be left either until the resolution is in committee or the bill which is to follow is referred to the committee on banking and commerce. First let me say that the proposal to refer the measure to the banking and commerce committee—

Mr. Sinclair: The public accounts committee.

Mr. Fulton: I am in entire agreement with that. As the parliamentary assistant has pointed out, many of the suggestions being incorporated into this measure have resulted from recommendations made by the public accounts committee as a result of studies it has made from time to time of the public accounts and the evidence it has had presented to it. However, I must say that it is going to be difficult for the public accounts committee at this session to give this measure the study which it deserves. As has already been suggested, this session could be known as the cost of living session, but it appears to me it is rapidly qualifying for the name of the committee session. The rapidity with