

Mr. David Kilgour (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, when I was making the point, I realized that I was going to be hoist with my own petard because a lot of things I was going to say are not totally relevant to the Bill. If I may withdraw that objection, I would be most obliged.

There will be two parts to my remarks. The first will deal with the question of closure. The second will deal with the merits of the Bill itself.

Before getting into those issues, Mr. Speaker, since this whole issue is one of accountability, I will make four points very quickly. With regard to the rules of accountability, I understand that since 1969 when the Government changed the rules, approximately \$500 billion to \$600 billion have gone through the House in terms of appropriations and spending. I am told that the grand total of \$1,000 has been deleted from that \$500 billion to \$600 billion. In other words, Members of the House are no longer accountable for the moneys being spent through the estimates appropriation process.

Second, we have a \$31 billion deficit this year. The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Gray) is supposed to see that tax moneys are spent efficiently. The fact that we have a \$31 billion deficit is testimony to the way in which we are accounting to the people whose money we are spending. At the end of this year we will have an accumulated deficit of approximately \$160 billion. This week we heard that the International Monetary Fund is concerned about Canada's position with regard to financial responsibility. We heard today that the European Management Institute has placed us last of 22 industrial countries in terms of being confident, attracting investment and that sort of thing. I do not have to remind the House about the obscene levels of unemployment in Canada, particularly among young people. I believe our productivity is the lowest of 22 OECD countries. We are either dead last or very close to last in terms of our productivity in an increasingly competitive world economy.

Everyone who looks at this Bill knows that it should really be called a Bill to reduce further the limited control which Members of Parliament have over Crown corporations. Therefore, when the Government and spokesmen opposite talk about this Bill in terms of increasing accountability, I put it to you that that is to make a joke of what is going on here today.

With respect to the question of closure, it strikes me that in a figurative sense the time allocation or closure which has been introduced today is the legislative equivalent of one of the most dreadful of all nuclear weapons, the neutron bomb. In a figurative sense, it leaves the Chamber, the windows, the lights, the Speaker's chair and even the Members standing, but in effect our tongues have been taken out of us. Our right to speak on the Bill has, in effect, been blown away. The right to speak on a measure before the House, Sir, is the most fundamental right that any Member of Parliament has. Is it not going back to the days of Cromwell or worse when the Government says that it has heard enough of us? The last speaker said that we have been speaking too much on the Bill. By implication the Government and the Government alone

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decides when it has heard enough on the Bill and it will do what it wants with the House.

That is not what parliamentary democracy should be about. Time and again the Government has introduced closure. Shortly the people of Canada will have an opportunity to express their opinions on a government which has systematically abused their economic prosperity and the rights of Members of Parliament and is today telling us we can no longer be heard on a Bill about which many of us feel very strongly.

Lastly, I would like to discuss the merits of the Bill. It is a bad Bill for many, many reasons. In the very limited time available to me I will give perhaps six reasons. The Bill leaves the Minister as the *de jure* shareholder but requires the Cabinet to approve most major initiatives, such as the appointment of directors, auditors, chairmen and chief executive officers as well as the operating capital budgets, corporate plans and by-laws. In other words, Cabinet will exercise the burden of the shareholder's powers. Being accountable to many, in my view, and in the opinion of others who have looked closely at the Bill, Crown corporations will be responsible to no one. In other words, there is no change in the status quo.

• (1600)

Second, the Bill seriously erodes the practical powers and prerogatives of directors of Crown corporations and undermines the attempt to upgrade their duties and responsibilities. You will know, Sir, that the traditional functions of directors are now, under this Bill, to be exercised by Cabinet. Cabinet, for example, appoints the chairman and the chief executive officer and sets their remuneration. Cabinet appoints the auditor. I wonder how many auditors appointed by the Cabinet will be other than friends of the Liberal Party.

Mr. King: All of them.

Mr. Kilgour: There is no doubt about that. Continuing on, Cabinet will approve and rescind by-laws and may direct a board to approve a by-law. In other words, the Cabinet will take away much of the authority of a director of a Crown corporation. But who but a robot would want to be on the board of a Crown corporation? Who but somebody who wants the *per diem* or who likes to travel or wants to work his or her way up in a Party which is about to go out of office would choose to be a director of a Crown corporation under this Bill?

On the question of the proliferation of Crown corporations, you will have noticed I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the parliamentary approval process will apply only to parent corporations and not to subsidiaries. You will thus know that that is the area where the greatest proliferation has occurred.

The juxtaposition of Section 100 with Section 155 appears to turn the prohibition on its head by allowing parent corporations to be set up under the CDCA with only Cabinet approval and a motion in Parliament. The Government will still be able to incorporate parent Crown corporations where an existing Act of Parliament allows it to do so.