

period of two years we had to sit back and observe the results of that report all across the country. We find the press leaping upon this kind of thing like over-zealous galloping gourmets. This is the kind of thing they want and the kind of thing they spread across the country. This might be fine, but I think it is unfair. To get that kind of fair information from Crown corporations, and to put that kind of defence before committees, I think it is necessary that we serve on these boards.

• (5:50 p.m.)

Let us not talk about semantics and the fact that we have committee work, work in the House of Commons and constituency mail to answer. The hon. member is simply suggesting a means of getting a point of view across. Let us study the question, and let somebody who perhaps has more time than hon. members to spend on this matter come up with a way in which such a system could be implemented so that the public interest could be best protected. It is for this reason I am speaking this afternoon. This is a matter which I think should be referred to a committee.

Mr. E. B. Osler (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I should like to commend the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) for the idea behind this motion. I am afraid, however, that is as far as I can go. So far as I am concerned, he spoiled his motion when he added the words, "so as to assure a better and more direct control of the legislative power over the executive power", and so on. I disagree with the motive contained therein. Had he not included the second part of his motion, I would have agreed with it.

It seems to me directors are directors; it does not matter whether they are directors of a Crown corporation or of any other company. They have a job to do. That job is to run the company to the best of their ability in accordance with the objectives for which the company was established. In the case of a Crown corporation, the corporation is set up by an act of Parliament to achieve certain objectives. The directors should be left with the right to achieve those objectives. The matter of whether or not the directors should be Members of Parliament is irrelevant.

One of the best members of the board of the BBC in not so recent years was Sir Harold Nicholson. If one were to read his intensely interesting memoirs one would find he did immensely valuable work for the BBC as a

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director while he was a Member of Parliament. That affiliation did not necessarily play much part in his role because I believe he was sort of an independent quasi Labourite who was able to carry out this function during the coalition government of the war years. I do not know whether or not this would have been possible in peacetime.

However, he acted as an invaluable informal liaison between the cabinet and the BBC during all the war years when it was necessary that the BBC try to help reflect government policy. Above all, he was an independent director of the BBC chosen for his independence, ability and sense of judgment. So, while I am for Members of Parliament being allowed to be directors of Crown corporations, I am not for the suggestion, as I read it, contained in the motion which indicates that in some way these directors would still be responsible to the House of Commons. I do not think that should be the situation at all.

In the case of Crown corporations, I believe if Members of Parliament were directors they should, like any other directors, be responsible to Parliament under the terms of the act under which the particular Crown corporation was created. The objective, of course, should not be the control by legislative power over executive power. Executive power should have nothing to do with a Crown corporation other than to change the rules under which the Crown corporation functions or to suggest to Parliament that the act under which a Crown corporation operates should be changed from year to year.

But God help us if we allow the executive to dabble in Crown corporations, especially in more sensitive areas like the CBC and the National Film Board. We all know of too many instances where in some countries information services became disguised or undisguised propaganda machines for government. This has not happened here, and it would be a poor day if it did.

Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): How could one member have such an influence?

Mr. Osler: One member probably could create a nasty atmosphere of fear under some circumstances. If such a member were independent, I would have nothing against a Member of Parliament sitting on a board. I served on the CBC board for 3½ years and would have been very thankful had there been one or two Members of Parliament serving on that board, because the board members felt isolated from Parliament to whom they were responsible.