

Supply

Auditor General cannot judge its effectiveness, because that would be a policy decision which would not be within his jurisdiction. However, it certainly should be within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada. We should consider whether there is such effectiveness based on studies on economy and efficiency carried out by the Auditor General.

• (1600)

I want to point out some errors, or illustrations, I suppose I should say, showing how Parliament has lost control of the taxpayers' dollar. I think Parliament has the responsibility of bringing this matter to the attention of the Government and the people of Canada, and the Government has the responsibility of listening to the recommendations which are being made.

An illustration of where we have lost control of the taxpayers' dollar is found in the area of letters of comfort. The amounts involved can be very insignificant indeed. In the last six years, more than \$1 billion has been advanced to Canadair through a sequence of letters of comfort. These were authorized by Parliament on March 31, 1982, after the fact. The authorized limit was some \$1.35 billion. This amount of taxpayers' money is at risk without what I would consider to be clear criteria or objectives for the guarantee of money coming into Canadair. We do not know whether there is due regard for economy and efficiency or whether that money was spent in an effective sort of way, because we do not have the facts before us to tell us that that money was spent wisely or very poorly by the federal Government in extending letters of comfort to Canadair.

Another area where mandates are overstepped and also where money is spent without any consideration of the poor taxpayer involves Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. Atomic Energy of Canada Limited was created back in 1952 and its mandate was to conduct nuclear research and development. "Development" means increasing the state of the art in nuclear technology. We now find that it is in a position where it has gone beyond the research and development aspects into production and sales. I would first point out that it has gone beyond its mandate without coming back to Parliament, without Parliament having any say in what AECL should be doing. As well, it has no regard for the taxpayers' dollars. It is very difficult to determine the actual amount spent by AECL, which is in the billions of dollars. Every time it sold a Candu reactor, we lost millions of dollars. Every time it opened a new heavy water plant, we had to subsidize it with millions of dollars more, and Liberal and Conservative Governments have done nothing to stop that.

I ask the people of Canada to keep in mind that, for the last 115 years, since Confederation, there have been Conservative and Liberal Governments running the country. In the case of AECL, it is likely that every person employed in the industry could have been given \$50,000 to start their own businesses and there would still have been a savings to the taxpayers of

Canada in light of the waste of money by that Crown Corporation with no parliamentary scrutiny whatsoever.

At this point in time I would like to move an amendment to the motion that we have before us today. I would move:

That the motion be amended by deleting the period at the end and adding the following:

"and that this House affirms the past and future role of Crown corporations in developing an independent and socially responsible Canadian economy".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member has moved an amendment.

Mr. Anguish: Mr. Speaker, there has been some dissension with the Conservative Party involving the role of Crown corporations.

Mr. Nielsen: Really?

Mr. Anguish: The speech of the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition today was very supportive of the accountability of Crown corporations. Then one hears the Hon. Member for York-Peel (Mr. Stevens), who is sometimes referred to as "The Slasher", talking about knee-capping many Crown corporations. I cannot say that all Crown corporations should be slashed or held up, although many Crown corporations—

Mr. Nielsen: Nothing in the till, anyway.

Mr. Anguish:—have abused the funds gained by taxpayers' dollars because they were not scrutinized by this Parliament.

Mr. Blenkarn: Would you like to knee-cap Atomic Energy?

Mr. Anguish: This Parliament should have the ability to assess whether or not Crown corporations are doing a good job. However, in the Bill introduced by the Conservatives in the last session of Parliament, Clause 33(2) stated:

The board of directors shall, in the exercise of its powers and duties, have due regard to sound business principles.

If this means that Crown corporations must be self-funded or make a profit and, if they do not, they face closure, then we in the NDP would disagree. From what the Leader of the Opposition said today, I think he would agree that most Crown Corporations need a social mandate or else one of promoting national policies and objectives. This must be taken into account as well, beyond consideration as to whether Crown corporations are sustaining themselves or making a profit.

I think that the motion involving accountability of Crown corporations is very timely. Certainly the Government has lost control of the public purse and Parliament is lagging behind as well. Parliament must have the mandate to consider accountability, not only the expenditures of Crown corporations but also of the Government.

Hon. Herb Gray (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the motion presented by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) certainly raises an important topic. It is unfortunate that, rather than addressing this topic, he spent his time