

*Main Estimates 1982-83*

and cabinet are not something which I am about to reveal or declare in the House of Commons. I am certain the President of the Privy Council will be coming forward, in due course, with an expression of his views and the views of government on the subject.

**Mr. Anguish:** Madam Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board concerning the \$5.7 billion reduction in the established programs financing to provincial governments over the next five years. The 1982 report of the Economic Council of Canada entitled "Financing Confederation" indicated that the council sees little merit in reductions in federal-provincial transfers which would, in effect, merely shift part of the burden of a declining federal deficit to less fortunate provincial governments.

Also I should like to refer to the report of the task force on federal-provincial fiscal arrangements, which reads in part:

We are agreed that the programs examined in the course of our work are serving vital social needs and merit undiminished support. Over-all funding of these programs should, in our view, be maintained at no less than current levels.

Did the President of the Treasury Board take any of this information under advisement before giving approval to the estimates for this year and the coming year? It seems as if he has totally looked away from it.

Also I should like to refer to the report of the task force on regulatory reform. I sat as a member of the task force and we have heard nothing about its recommendations. What does the minister do with the information recommended to Treasury Board? He so often overlooks it or seemingly does nothing with it.

**Mr. Johnston:** Madam Speaker, I take any advice we receive in Treasury Board, which falls within matters of my jurisdiction, most seriously. I hope hon. members recognize the extent to which Treasury Board has responded by preparing a new form of the estimates, and a guide for the estimates, in tabling "Accountable Management", and in keeping members informed of the wide variety of reforms which have taken place across government over the last several years.

With respect to established program financing, the estimates are designed to reflect the policy and financial requirements stated by the Minister of Finance when he tabled the budget on November 12, 1981. It is not for the estimates to change the policy established by the Department of Finance. The estimates simply reflect the policy for 1982, 1983 and ongoing years.

**Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette):** Madam Speaker, I have a question for the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Johnston) concerning the western development fund. Almost a year ago when he tabled his estimates, I had an opportunity to ask him what moneys were allocated in the estimates for the fund and, without becoming specific, what kinds of programs we could look forward to if there were supplementary estimates to take care of moneys allocated under the fund. The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) and the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) referred to it. Recently the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) announced in

Winnipeg that some \$1.35 billion would be made available over the next four years to finance some additional rail capacity. Could the minister give us some idea whether that money will be made available from the western development fund? What other programs can we look forward to and advise our constituents of, so that they may apply and make use of the western development fund?

**Mr. Johnston:** Madam Speaker, again that is not an appropriate subject for me to respond to in tabling the Main Estimates of the government for the year 1982-83. The expenditure plan in Part I sets forth various envelope levels. It is clear that there are policy reserves in each of the ongoing years, but the hon. member will simply have to await announcements by responsible ministers as time evolves.

**Mr. Mayer:** Madam Speaker, I should like to ask the minister a more general question. A year ago he replied to me by saying that \$2 billion in total over a period of three years to 1983-84 would be made available under the western development fund. Also a year ago he mentioned that \$350 million will be brought forward through supplementary estimates. Could he give figures this year similar to the ones he provided last year, so that we have some idea what level of expenditure the government plans on using through the western development fund and at least some idea of the broad-brush expenditures the government plans as far as the western development fund is concerned?

**Mr. Johnston:** Madam Speaker, I repeat my earlier answer. I think this is a matter which should be addressed by the responsible minister. The hon. member will have ample opportunity to question the responsible minister both in committee and in the House, whether it be the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) or the other ministers who are charged with these areas within their respective jurisdictions.

• (1610)

**Mr. Mayer:** Madam Speaker, I have another general question. First, has the minister allowed for any expenditures in his estimates as far as the western development fund is concerned? Could the minister also give us some idea which ministers will be bringing forward supplementary estimates which would provide for the expenditure of funds under the western development fund, if in fact such a fund exists?

[Translation]

**Mr. Johnston:** Madam Speaker, I cannot go on repeating myself all afternoon. It seems to me it is obvious that there are ministers with responsibility for other economic sectors and, therefore, I have no intention of giving a detailed analysis of expenditures in areas that fall under the jurisdiction of my colleagues.

[English]

**Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon):** Madam Speaker, I have two questions for the minister. Having taken a quick glance through the estimates which have just been tabled, I notice that there are a number of references to items referring to