

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland): Mr. Speaker, last evening I was discussing two aspects of the Throne Speech debate, those dealing with university grants and the question of agriculture. Today I should like to discuss a number of topics, the first of which relates to Expo '67 and requests which I have made, not only in this session but in the last session, regarding the establishment of a parliamentary committee, the deliberations of which would guarantee to the taxpayers of this nation that their tax dollars were being spent in a prudent manner on this great exhibition which will take place during our birthday celebrations in 1967.

At the first opportunity this session I asked the Minister of Trade and Commerce whether he would agree to the establishment of such a committee, and he informed me at that time that he had not had sufficient opportunity to determine whether such a committee should be established. But apparently it has not taken him very long to find out that there were very serious problems associated with Expo '67, one of which is the soaring deficit with which all Canadian taxpayers are going to be faced when Expo '67 is completed.

Last year I put a question on the order paper in this connection and was informed that the projected deficit would be in the order of \$60 million. I find in the January 22 issue of the *Toronto Telegram* a report of an interview with the minister, and that the officials of the fair have now informed him that this deficit will be \$80 million. The article says the minister is far from happy with the projected deficit, and he can feel certain that other Canadians will feel exactly the same as he feels.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other matters which are covered in this article which should certainly give the Minister of Trade and Commerce a great deal of concern, not to mention all members of parliament and the taxpayers of this nation. I was somewhat shocked to learn that the Auditor General is anything but happy with what is happening at Expo '67. According to the *Toronto Telegram* for January 22:

Another man who is deeply concerned with Expo's financial headaches is A. Maxwell Henderson, Canada's Auditor General. His annual report, expected to be tabled in the Commons next week, contains sharp criticism of the fair's financing.

It is certain to cause fireworks in the Commons. In an interview, Mr. Henderson said there has been "a lack of authority" for federal spending on Expo.

The Address—Mr. Coates

In his estimation, there is questionable authority for the federal government giving Expo more than the basic \$20 million grant permitted under the 1962 legislation.

Further down the article continues:

Mr. Henderson said his report will also contain much of the same criticism of Expo spending as has already been filed by Quebec Auditor General Gustave Tremblay in his annual report. They act jointly as auditors for Expo.

No one, Mr. Speaker, is blaming the Minister of Trade and Commerce for what has transpired at Expo since it was initiated; and let me emphasize that no one in the Conservative party is opposed to the idea of Expo and what will happen there. It was the Conservative party which was able to convince the world authorities that Expo '67 should be a reality. We were the ones who passed the legislation which provided the original \$20 million grant. We are not the least bit concerned about its merits. Indeed, we are as excited as any other Canadians to see this fair going forward, and we are coming close to the date when it will be opened.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we do not want to see any individuals going on a spending binge at the taxpayers' expense, a circumstance which will not only shock us when we learn of it but, if things continue as they are going, will put us in a position where we cannot do anything about it because the money will already have been spent.

● (11:50 a.m.)

Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. The former Minister of Trade and Commerce, the present Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp), has a great deal to answer for in this house for allowing what has happened at Expo to take place without forming a committee of this house to enable hon. members to have an opportunity to scrutinize the kind of spending which has been taking place. Indeed, one of the officials has expressed the opinion that we should not bother them, that we should let them go ahead. Now, apparently, it is a terrible thing for a member of parliament to ask questions about Expo. It would seem that in the minds of these officials it is un-Canadian.

Mr. Winters: They welcome it.

Mr. Coates: I am glad you welcome it, sir, and I hope you will set up the committee I have asked for so all Canadians will know what is happening.

When I began asking questions about this I anticipated from the letters I had received and the conversations I had had that all was