

Supply

For the record, back in 1973 when the government allowed the estimates to be reduced, albeit by \$20,000, the member for Shawinigan, our current Prime Minister, voted against the motion. He refused to allow the reduction. Here is a great opportunity for him to make amends by allowing this motion to go through this evening. The Liberal government has a great opportunity to change and redress the problems of history and the things that have gone on in the past.

The confidence convention has traditionally been interpreted to mean that any motion to reduce the vote on the estimates would be viewed as a test of the confidence of this House in the government. We are saying that if there is a reduction in the estimates the government need not necessarily have to resign. We are not going to go that far.

The confidence convention reinforced by excessive party discipline leads to fiscal rubber stamping and fiscal irresponsibility by the House of Commons and the committees when it considers the estimates at this stage. The result has been an extremely modest reduction since 1973, as I said, one-millionth of one per cent.

We would like to see that changed. The negative implications of those two things have contributed to the fact that we are now \$500 billion in debt. This House has never been able to express its real opinion as we rack up \$40 billion deficits every year. This year is going to be no exception.

We have never been able to express our opinion on the lavish and excessive government spending which has gone on unabated now for over 20 years since we last had a balanced budget. Why? Because there has been no genuine parliamentary safeguard on government spending and there has been insufficient scrutiny by this House on these changes. Change and reform are required and are long overdue.

That is why the Reform Party has offered an alternative. There has been a longstanding Reform policy that says we want to modernize the confidence convention. We are saying to allow this House to express its will freely and democratically on the estimates. If there are reductions, then let there be a motion after it has all been debated and voted upon. If reductions are approved then let a motion of confidence be placed in this House. If that is approved as well then the government knows it still enjoys the confidence of this House and can continue to govern.

These are the things we are talking about as Reformers bringing a fresh new face to Parliament, a new opportunity to do things so much better. For the government whip who said earlier to give them an opportunity to show they are prepared to make an example of the government, here is a great opportunity for them to start now by allowing the reductions.

We are talking about a reduction in money spent by the Board of Internal Economy. The main estimates according to the President of the Treasury Board indicate they are going to spend \$164,985,000 in the administration of the House of Commons.

The government whip has told us of his plan which has already led to specific reductions in this fiscal year of over \$2 million. We are saying to this government, since that amount has already been reduced and eliminated from spending by this government in this year, which was acknowledged by the previous speaker, then surely it is not a threat to the convention of confidence that we amend the main estimates to reflect the new reality.

• (1925)

The point we want to make is that these reductions are already in place. They have been approved. The government whip has acknowledged that point in his plan. We are saying there is no threat of confidence by recognizing that and putting them back and changing the main estimates to reflect the reality.

We will be talking on other motions about minuscule amounts like \$20,000. Out of the total expenditure of \$163.6 billion this government is going to spend this year, what is \$20,000? Is \$20,000 a threat to convention? Does the member think the government is going to fall on that? No. That is the point I want to make.

Another point is the Liberal platform that cuts the grants and subsidies. We are concurring with that point because we also believe in cuts to grants and subsidies. We knocked 5 per cent off that as well.

There are three great opportunities where those members can concur without any threat whatsoever to them and to their government by acknowledging that a cut has already been made. The main estimates should be amended to reflect that reality. The minuscule amount of \$20,000 based on all the inflation caused by the Liberal government in its past life and the Tory government is not what it used to be. It is worth a lot less than in 1973. How on earth could that affect the confidence this House would express in the government?

Liberal policies say cuts to grants and subsidies. We concur so let us just do it. That is all we ask. That is the point. My challenge to the government and to all members on the other side of the House is to recognize what they have been saying which was reiterated by the government whip: "Give an example starting with ourselves". A direct quote of five minutes ago.

Here is a great opportunity to do so. I challenge government members to stand up later this evening and vote according with what they have said in the red book and in accordance with the platform on which they were elected.