

Financial Administration Act

● (1232)

Fourth, the CBC, an institution which at times has been one of the foremost purveyors of anti-social, anti-family, amoral philosophy, has, since 1970, been subsidized to the tune of \$2.4 billion. Its subsidy from the Canadian public purse has risen from the 1969-70 level of \$166 million to the 1977-78 level of \$467 million. While acknowledging the fine quality of some of its programs, this institution has been contributing to the undermining of the moral fibre of this nation by its insensitivity to the ethical values and personal integrity that have made our nation great.

Protests have been raised, letters have been written, speeches have been made, but we find little action has been taken to correct the inadequacies and failings of this organization. Canadians ask why they should support this organization to such an extent when it seems at times it is undermining the very values and principles that have been the mainstay of our society.

Fifth, Canadians have seen the cost of operation of the Prime Minister's office skyrocket from about \$500,000 when he took office to \$2.5 million in 1977-78. In ten years the increase is over 250 per cent. I do not think the Prime Minister can claim that his office is functioning better than in the past. They have been moving into a lot of areas where they have no business, and there has been a duplication of services or agencies. I do not believe this exorbitant increase has produced any improvement in governing the nation.

Sixth, Canadians have been outraged to see the huge deficits incurred by this administration, the deficit in 1978-79 being in the area of \$10 billion. That is about \$2 billion more than the total expenditures of the Pearson government, and about the same as the total expenditures of this government when the Prime Minister took office. Canada is now in the position of borrowing money to pay interest on money borrowed earlier. These interest charges cost Canadians about 14 cents out of every tax dollar spent by the federal government. With this kind of operation it is no wonder that the international money markets do not want to hold on to our dollars, but want more stable money. Small wonder, as a result, that our dollar has fallen to 88 cents in terms of U.S. currency.

Seventh, the Prime Minister now has a cabinet fully nine members larger than when he took over as Prime Minister. Again, the Prime Minister believes that big is good and that he can make up in size what he lacks in quality in his cabinet. That is just not true. Instead of having an incompetent cabinet of 24 members when he took over as Prime Minister, he now has an incompetent cabinet of 33 members. President Jimmy Carter of the United States, who has to run a country with a federal budgetary expenditure of about \$432 billion, gets by with a cabinet of 14. The Prime Minister, by comparison, needs 33 cabinet ministers to handle a budgetary expenditure which we all agree is outrageous at \$48 billion.

Earlier I referred to the Auditor General's statement to the effect that the government had lost or was close to losing effective control of the public purse. The Auditor General, J. J. Macdonell, also referred to the fact that, based on the study

[Mr. Patterson.]

of the systems of departments, agencies, and Crown corporations audited by himself, financial management and control in the government of Canada are, to use his words, "grossly inadequate." Mr. Macdonell went on to say in his report to parliament that this is likely to remain so until the government takes strong, appropriate, and effective measures to rectify what he termed a "critically serious" situation.

A part of the Auditor General's solution was to propose the establishment of a position that would be the chief financial office of the government, that of comptroller general of Canada. The Auditor General put quite a heavy emphasis on this position as a means by which Canadians could reclaim some measure of control of the public purse. I may say that this is absolutely necessary because control of the public purse by this parliament has been eroded by the government. The system of bringing estimates before a committee of the whole to be dealt with carefully and perused diligently, has gone. Now we just allocate a certain amount of days to discuss problems and issues, and then everything has to go through; billions of dollars of expenditure are approved in a few moments. I say that the Auditor General is right. We have to reclaim some measure of control in some way, and we hope it can be accomplished by the establishment of this office.

The rules do not permit me to get too specific at this point on the office of comptroller general, but I do want to reiterate a couple of important items that were referred to by the Auditor General in his report to parliament this year.

In many cases the particular office to which a person is appointed is only as good as that person, so needless to say it is extremely important that the right man be chosen as Canada's new comptroller general. I am not in a position to say whether the government's choice of Mr. Harry Rogers is adequate, but his credentials are impressive.

The following are the guidelines that were laid down by the Auditor General in his suggestion for the office of comptroller general: first, the person ought to have appropriate professional qualifications; second, he should have a proven record of outstanding competence and achievement at senior levels of responsibility; and, third, he should have extensive experience as a senior financial executive in a large organization in either the public or private sector. It appears, as we look at this, that the gentleman chosen by the government has the right background according to the Auditor General's criteria.

My understanding of the post being created by this bill is that it is one which will, in all likelihood, have no authority to control spending. I listened to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Andras) when he was questioned on a television program about this particular matter. He made it abundantly clear that there was not to be any change in the allocation of funds. As reported at page 3588 of *Hansard*, the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Lefebvre) made it abundantly clear as well that this officer would not have any real authority over the expenditure of funds when he said:

In light of the close functional relationship between the proposed position of comptroller general and the existing position of secretary of the Treasury Board,