

Auditor General

Mr. Reid: Parliament has the power to reduce expenditure.

Mr. Baldwin: With that slavish majority over there, that is nonsense.

Mr. Chrétien: For a while we had a minority.

Mr. Alexander: You were good then. You behaved yourselves.

Mr. Chrétien: The people of Canada decided to put all their confidence in one party and they put an end to that situation. We would have been quite happy to share power with hon. members opposite at times, and at other times with the NDP. We were supported by the NDP more, because hon. members opposite were not smart enough. They could have used the situation to get a more conservative administration of sorts, but they kept on playing politics. They always play politics, Mr. Speaker, instead of coming to grips with problems and offering constructive solutions.

Hon. members opposite are always moving motions that produce nothing but a few speeches. I do not mind, of course, because I have to get in shape for the next election and I need the practice. However, I could use my time for other matters that are more meaningful. As I say, we will bring in a bill which will go to committee. If this takes a year, then hon. members opposite can get up and blame me for not delivering. We are here to be blamed if we fail, but we have not even started to take action yet.

Mr. Baldwin: You are afraid to debate the report.

Mr. Chrétien: We are not afraid, but we do not want to lose time. We want to implement some of the good points in the report as quickly as possible, and this is why I should like some constructive criticism from the opposition. Instead, Mr. Speaker, they have gone back to 1780 and governments of that day. Perhaps we would have had more entertainment by reading some of those ancient speeches than listening to the kind of nonsense we have had today.

We hope the opposition will address themselves to the serious problems facing this nation. In less than a month we will have a budget. This would have been a good occasion to tell the government whether to cut expenditure or increase it, and if we should spend more, where we should spend that money. Or they could tell us where to make cuts. Instead they sit back and wait until the decisions are made, and then complain because those decisions are not what they want. The people of Canada would like to know what the opposition feels is the best thing for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) to do.

Mr. Baldwin: He has not made up his own mind yet.

Mr. Chrétien: Of course he has not. He is waiting.

Mr. Baldwin: Waiting for us to advise him.

Mr. Chrétien: He is waiting to hear what hon. members think, but they do not offer any constructive proposals. They have three leaders in that party over there, four

[Mr. Chrétien.]

critics on economic policy, and so on. Perhaps one day they will all be able to get together.

Mr. Baldwin: Do you follow Munro or Turner?

Mr. Chrétien: We do not fight outside; that is one great quality of the Liberal party. We fight inside and have a lot of discussion, but we know that when the time comes for the good of the country we will stick together. The people of Canada want constructive leadership, and that is what they cannot find among members on the other side. We have our differences. We do not agree all the time. If ever an hon. member opposite becomes President of the Treasury Board, he will soon discover that very few members of the government agree with him. But when the time comes we unite because we know that in difficult times the people want leadership.

Mr. Baldwin: You unite because you love your jobs.

Mr. Chrétien: I will listen to what hon. members have to say, but so far I am not impressed by the motion. It seems to me this is one more day lost. We would have spent the time more constructively if we had debated a bill. We are losing many days by futile debate of irrelevant matters. We have stated our policy, that a bill will be brought forward in the fall or next session. If the bill is no good, then tell us at that time. If I do not bring forward a bill within a reasonable time, let hon. members opposite make a motion and tell me that I have not done my job.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): We will remember that.

Mr. Chrétien: What burns me up, Mr. Speaker, is being criticized for nothing. I do not mind being criticized if there is substance to the criticism; but criticizing me for nothing, as hon. members are today, is a waste of parliamentary time. It may very well be that legislation that is good for Canada will not be passed because of this debate.

We hear all sorts of nonsense about so-called waste of expenditure. The opposition has a kind of Watergate syndrome, always thinking that there is something sinister about the government. I think our system in Canada is a good one, but if we continue to use these days to waste time like we are doing today the people will become even more cynical about this place.

• (1750)

Mr. Baldwin: Have you been reading the evidence in the Hamilton trial lately?

Mr. Chrétien: That is the kind of innuendo and so on I refer to. We have a parliamentary system in which we do not go on fishing, expeditions, but when there is a fish caught we fry him in court right away, and that is what we are doing. This kind of innuendo and so on is the sort of thing with which you can kill your mother or your wife. It is like meeting a friend who says that your wife was not home this afternoon and your neighbour was not home this afternoon. He does not say they were in the same bed, but this is the kind of thing that is implied. When you have an accusation, you should make it.