

Restraint of Government Expenditures

programs as bilingualism for the public service, surely a government "program" by any standard.

In his introduction to the Estimates, Treasury Board president Jean Chrétien reminds us that this approach "represents a synthesis of the recommendations of many observers, particularly the members of parliament who served on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts during the first session of the Twenty-Eighth Parliament with whom the new form of these estimates was discussed in all significant particulars."

This was in November, 1968, when, as auditor general, I was the adviser to the Public Accounts Committee of the day. C. M. Drury, then president of the Treasury Board, presented the government's proposals. One of these was a still further reduction in the number of votes or debating opportunities available to the members of parliament.

This is one of the main problems. With the rule changes, the government reduced the number of votes. Prior to 1969 there were approximately 350 votes. This number has been reduced to around 160. When you have about 350 votes, you have detailed accounts of each department's expenditures. But now in these reduced votes you have such references as "others, went up \$5 million", or "miscellaneous, went up \$3 million". What kind of examination is that? The Canadian people are entitled to a better scrutiny of how their tax dollars are being spent. This is the problem we are facing today. There is no control and no proper examination. That is why the government feels the need to introduce bills such as Bill C-19.

The article goes on to read:

These reductions may have served the needs of the Treasury Board administration but they have not facilitated the work of the MPs. The sums they must deal with are so large and the information available in the blue books is so minimal that for many MPs the votes have become exercises in frustration and futility.

Certainly that is a truthful statement.

The committee also charged the auditor general in 1968 with seeing to it that a certain basic minimum disclosure criteria is followed in publishing the estimates and instructed him to bring any deviations to the attention of parliament. I carried out this instruction up to 1972 but the committee seldom got around to examining the cases and censuring the Treasury Board. As the spending becomes larger and larger every year, less and less disclosure exists.

● (1650)

The present auditor general, my successor, is concerned about this . . .

And he certainly showed his concern in the report he filed this week.

In the first installment of his massive *Financial Management and Control Study* tabled last December, he wrote: "The study leads to one clear conclusion: the present state of the financial management and control systems of departments and agencies of the Government of Canada is significantly below acceptable standards of quality and effectiveness."

Small wonder that parliament has lost control of government spending. The members—our representatives—scarcely have a fighting chance to get adequate information on the spending they have to approve. When they approve the 1976-77 spending estimates, they will indeed be turning \$42 billion over to a government whose financial controls are "significantly below acceptable standards of quality and effectiveness."

It is time this was all changed, and that is why I feel we should have a wide open and full discussion about the report of the Auditor General and Bill C-19, and perhaps before we are finished the government might even bring in some amendments to strengthen this bill.

There are also others who conduct studies of government waste and mismanagement. Not only the Auditor General and

[Mr. McKenzie.]

hon. members of the official opposition, but also members of the news media and others have carried out research, and I would like to quote from an article written by Jacques Grenier as follows:

Until a few months ago, a florist from Pickering, Ontario, used to drive about 250 miles every Friday afternoon just to do his job. He'd go to Ottawa, to the corner of Bank and Wellington streets, in the heart of the city, and enter the Confederation Building. There he'd spend several hours tending to the plants that abound in hallways and offices. That done, he'd head back to Pickering. The annual cost to the Canadian taxpayer? Try \$60,000.

These kinds of expenditures have got to be stopped. These are not priorities or necessities, by any stretch of the imagination.

In his article on government extravagance Mr. Grenier went on to say:

The blame lies not with the florist, who was merely fortunate to land such a bountiful job, but with the bureaucracy that would permit such abuses. The sad truth of the matter is that the federal civil service has reached the point where it is no longer controllable. In truth, Chrétien was underguessing: for the present fiscal year there are 352,836 federal public service employees. To put that in perspective, it's an increase of 31 per cent over the past eight years, whereas the entire national employed working force has risen only 22 per cent over the same period. Or, in yet another manner, 10 federal employees in 1976 for every one such worker in 1940.

In the past decade, Ottawa has exploded upwards, with dozens of glass and steel high-rise buildings crowding into a 50-square-block area in the centre of the city. The nation's business goes on in thousands upon thousands of offices and cubicles, the life of the country filtering along a network of in-and-out-baskets. The short circuits and the abuses are built into the system.

One has to wonder about all the buildings the government has in Ottawa, the huge empires being built in Hull and in other parts of Quebec. Now we are told that the Department of Veterans Affairs is to move to Prince Edward Island. There are two huge buildings here on Wellington Street; what is going to happen to those buildings? Are they going to be sold, left vacant, or are more government departments to be moved in to fill those buildings up with still more civil servants? There has been no response from the government as to what it is going to do with those two DVA buildings.

Mr. Grenier's articles goes on as follows:

A former senior official with External Affairs, John Starnes, recently headed a government task force looking into certain aspects of the civil service. He found: (1) the civil service is too large and growing too fast; (2) there are many employees who are being paid more than they are worth; and (3) there are many employees . . .

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I draw to the attention of the Chair that the hon. member who presently has the floor is not addressing himself to the bill which is before us.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: You are insulting the Chair. The Chair is listening to the speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I am sure hon. members will find that if they hear the hon. member out, he will, hopefully, relate his remarks to the bill which is before us.