

are dollars to be shaved off in the way we spend money as well as where we spend it.

Finally we must be prepared to question the *status quo* in absolutely every area. I think we can learn a great deal by looking at something like the New Zealand model where in fact it was understood that unless some major structural changes took place to government that that government would go into bankruptcy. One of the things it did was to shave off 11 per cent of its operating costs in one year by setting up a contract between a minister and his deputy. That contract was based on the ability to deliver productivity throughout the year rather than to meet a budget target that might have been set artificially or had grown over the years because of artificial cost of living criteria.

I will close by saying that we have to be flexible and we have to be imaginative. Our managers and our management have to be the same way. I am pleased with what I see already and I am convinced that Canadians will expect more in the coming years and that they will continue to be well served.

• (1820)

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that the member for Winnipeg South agrees that one of the important issues is accountability. Maybe I could add stewardship which I think I mentioned in my speech a few minutes ago. By stewardship I mean the action of elected officials to judiciously examine every expenditure made against the capability or the capacity of Canadians to pay. I think that has to be made more public and more prevalent in our system.

I would like to make one comment on Public Service 2000 on which my friend from Winnipeg South made some remarks. I agree that the objective to give managers more powers to manage is a reasonably good objective. The difficulty with that is that there is absolutely no accountability to Parliament by managers. In Public Service 2000 if there is one weakness in the whole system it is that managers will have more powers but they will not be accountable to the elected representatives of this House for the use of that power. I find that to be a weak link in the whole system.

Supply

I want to ask my Progressive Conservative friend a question about something that was suggested in this House which I alluded to in my remarks and that is the need for more concerted efforts of all levels of federal, provincial and municipal governments to co-operate and to meet regularly to discuss this over-all national debt that we have to face.

As she knows, her government has off-loaded a lot of responsibilities—if I may use that word—onto provincial authorities and they in turn have off-loaded onto municipal authorities. It could be social welfare programs or housing or whatever.

I want to ask her if she would agree with the idea of having a federal-provincial-municipal conference—the large cities with the provinces and the federal government—to come to grips with the magnitude of the deficit. I am told the deficit is close to \$575 billion. That is the total of federal, provincial, and municipal debt right now. We are accumulating debt at a rapid pace across this country.

I think there is a clock in Vancouver that ticks at some \$63,000 every minute. It comes to about \$100 million a day. In 10 days there is \$1 billion added to the debt. The compound interest on the debt—paid interest on interest—is one of the difficult problems we have to face.

I am asking her specifically if she would support such an initiative, for example calling a tripartite federal-provincial-municipal conference to discuss our debt problems and how to address them.

Mrs. Dobbie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague. I think that is an innovative thought to bring all three levels of government together. I know that certainly today, although the federal government collects the most in taxes over all because we have the most people to tax there is no question that the second largest level of government is the municipal level. Cities have become the dwelling places of many Canadians and they have huge administrative problems.

The member is right. When one level of government says that there will not be any more increases the next level of government passes that down and there is always somebody at the end that gets squeezed and it is generally the cities.