

Main Estimates

outlays of \$1.2 billion to give the country the services and the administration Canadians need. But when we examine in committee the expenditure made by the various departments, we realize there would be ways of reducing them in many cases and using the money in other fields to render greater service to the population.

The minister's statement and the covering document outlined the main measures contained in the budget. We can see that 27.8 per cent of a budget of \$28,242 million are spent for health and welfare. It is quite natural because all the efforts of a country, a family or an individual are aimed at protecting health, and at meeting physical needs. It is quite natural that a high percentage of the expenditures be earmarked for health and welfare.

There is a second item which also takes an important part in the budget, namely economic expansion and support. I do agree that efforts must be made in this area but I ask the government, the cabinet and the President of the Treasury Board to consider the matter seriously before the subsidies which have been granted to big corporations are paid to see if the millions of dollars Canadians pay to expand or maintain their industries are really productive and create employment. If necessary, we should make comprehensive inquiries to see if money has been wasted and to prevent this from becoming scandals.

A third item that is also very important is the public debt. I think we could speak about it two days and two nights, and there would be more to be said.

An hon. Member: Two months.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Yes, for two months more. It is an important item. It is ridiculous to see how this item is considered as sacred. No one is able, in the existing system, to reduce it. We can discuss the others, but not this one. It is untouchable, it is more sacred than God himself.

I think that our financing system in the public sector could be modified by making greater use of the institutions at our disposal, if only one act were changed—the Bank of Canada Act—so that the government can ask this institution, which we really own, to provide the public sector with the credits it needs at an interest rate covering administration costs only.

After all, Mr. Speaker, what is a monetary system? I always thought it had to be a service, like the postal service, for instance. The monetary system must also be a service. It must be under government control and adjusted to the needs of the people. The day we stop allowing the tradesmen of the nation's credit to get richer because they have the privilege of making as many loans and deposits as they want under legislation that was enacted by parliament, but which should be amended, we will be able to lower the cost of servicing the debt. These billion dollars can be used to provide better services, to finance, for example, local initiatives programs. Every day people ask that their projects be accepted because they want to work. It would not cost one cent more to Canadians, nor to the government. The Minister of Manpower and Immigration would be very happy to approve more projects and Canadians would be happy to be able to earn their living.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, before finally moving on to other business, may I make an announcement about the disposition of the estimates and ask whether the House might agree to a procedure that would assist the Leader of the Opposition and myself in having a look at the rules of the House in relation to the estimates.

First of all, the motion of reference of the estimates will be made by Monday so that the examination can begin. I wonder whether the House will be disposed to pass now, without any debate, government order No. 10 which appears under Government Business. I would point out that that particular motion does provide for a temporary as well as a permanent change in the rules. It would enable the committee to deal immediately with this and other suggestions.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am very worried about the procedure that has been proposed by the government leader. My worries and fears are that if the opportunity is not given to all members of parliament, not just the House leaders and not just the party leaders but all members of parliament in their capacity as members of parliament, to debate and discuss questions of procedure, then the amendments that would be proposed could be restrictive and not encompass the views of many members of the House who have been here a long time and who have every right to make an input.

Having said that, I want to say that we are quite prepared, if that is the case, to enter into a debate with respect to those matters immediately. I might remind you, Mr. Speaker, that that matter has been kicking around on the Order Paper for some time, that a tour of the Mother of Parliaments has taken place, that other members have studied and read on that matter, and that all members, and particularly members of the opposition, are anxious to have those changes. If the government House leader is also anxious to have those changes, let him bring them about in a way that is not restrictive of the rights of parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: I assume that the matter can only be dealt with upon unanimous consent. I take it that it is not necessary to ask whether there is unanimous consent.

Mr. McGrath: I should like to raise a point regarding the point of order before this matter is settled. I do not think it is asking too much to ask for an assurance from the government House leader—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. In fairness, because the President of the Privy Council had made what could be construed as a comment when he put the suggestion forward, I felt it proper to allow the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) to make a comment in response. The fact of the matter is that the President of the Privy Council was seeking something that could only be done by unanimous consent. If there is unanimous consent, it could be done now; if there is not, it would not be in order to debate the matter. In fairness, having allowed comments on both sides, I cannot let the matter go