

Business of Supply

grave exception to some of the expenditures made on behalf of the Prime Minister's residence.

The Prime Minister was able during his speech to give both an appropriate explanation for some of the points raised, and an accurate response. He reminded the right hon. gentleman, though he was not here, of some of the alleged extravagances that could more appropriately be laid at that right hon. gentleman's door. He referred specifically to the acquisition of a number of acres of land for his personal recreation, the stocking of lakes, and the building of a bunker in the backyard of 24 Sussex Street, all of which were creations of that right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert.

I realize, of course, that hon. members opposite were more concerned with those aspects of the speech of the right hon. member for Prince Albert that dealt somewhat savagely with their own leader. In any event the Prime Minister came to the House with a response in areas that were of minor relevance as compared to the heavy burden he carries. We would all agree that the Prime Minister gave a very adequate, dignified, and appropriate response. I was gratified when the hon. member for Winnipeg North stated he felt like most Canadians, that this convenience of amenities for our Prime Minister and the Leader of the Official Opposition were entirely appropriate and in keeping with the dignity and size of this country. I join in that sentiment.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a question of privilege. I do not want to be put in the same category as the Prime Minister in terms of facilities.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Chairman, I think the Prime Minister submitted more adequate and factual evidence to show that the extravagances of the Leader of the Opposition's office were somewhat greater in proportion than those of the Prime Minister's office or the office of the Privy Council.

Mr. Andre: Wrong.

Mr. Abbott: "Wrong", says the hon. member for Calgary Centre, who was not in the House.

Mr. Andre: Yes I was, and your figures are wrong.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: At least we presented good figures.

Mr. Abbott: Mr. Chairman, I hear the interjections of, I suspect, the hon. member for Rocky Mountain. When I think of that hon. member I am reminded of the time I lived in Calgary and the chinook breezes of hot air that blow in from the coast through the Rocky Mountains to warm Calgarians, and I often feel we have a transplant of that in this House here.

Mr. Baldwin: How many years did you spend in Calgary?

Mr. Abbott: There are some facts about the Prime Minister's workload that should be pointed out to those who are so ready to criticize him for having a large, active, and

[Mr. Abbott.]

hardworking staff. One must realize that the Prime Minister receives some 115,000 letters a year, or approximately 100 a day.

Mr. Alexander: He should, and we know why.

An hon. Member: And he reads them all, too.

Mr. Abbott: He reads a lot of them. One must remember that, almost unique among democratic leaders in the world, he sits in this House daily and is asked, to this date, in this session over 500 oral questions, most of them from my limited experience of very marginal value.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Your experience is limited, you were right the first time.

Mr. Abbott: If I have had one experience in this House—

An hon. Member: We have heard this speech before.

Mr. Abbott: You may have heard it before and you are going to hear it again. The series of repetitious and inane speeches that come from members on the opposite side come in large part from the hon. member for Rocky Mountain. Notwithstanding the fact that the expenses of the Prime Minister are proportionately less than those of the Leader of the Opposition, he carries a heavy burden acting as head of the government party, head of the executive, and leader of the parliamentary party. I do not think any member of this House would begrudge the Prime Minister an adequate staff to carry out this heavy workload.

An hon. Member: He is not carrying it out, and that's the point.

Mr. Abbott: Those of us who have served even for a limited time in this House realize the heavy burden carried by the Prime Minister of this country. I would say in fairness that the Leader of the Opposition also carries a heavy burden, but the largest part of his burden comes from carrying those hon. members who sit behind him. The fact is that his party has been graced by a substantial sum of money for research purposes. Like most of my colleagues I was stupefied by this sum of money for research, particularly when I related it to the kind of ill-informed questions directed from across the aisle. I hope and expect in the future that the Leader of the Opposition will recognize the largeness of this sum and see that some of the product of this research is conveyed to hon. members opposite in order that their questions might have some relevance or some content in the future.

I should like to say one or two words about the problems which relate to the consideration of these estimates, and I am thinking of the rules of parliament and parliament's effectiveness. I think many Canadians feel there is a need for improvement in the performance of this House. I think many of the rules which some hon. members have been travelling abroad to learn about should be introduced at an early stage.

It is true to say that many departments of government today are loathe to submit needed legislative reforms