

about estimates; don't raise that." The hon. member will not muzzle me about overspending. He can say what he wants but I will continue to show to the Canadian people the sums that this government is spending.

While these fundamental issues have to be looked at, there must also be some mechanism whereby the estimates are referred to committee. The chairmen of these committees cannot stall day after day, week after week, month after month, and not call the committee. That is the best defence. We have seen the other defences. I suppose it is good politics but the minister just turns up his collar and lets the arrows fly and hopes that May 31 will come and his estimates will be passed automatically. Under this procedure we do not have the right to criticize.

● (1532)

I hope the government takes our representations very seriously. It is absolutely necessary that we get a branch such as this which can exercise much more careful supervision over the daily expenditures of the government. The government is overspending this year by an amount which is more than was spent in the first budget under the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). That first budget totalled \$10.9 billion. Today, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) says the over-expenditure will be in the neighbourhood of \$11.5 billion. To put it in another way, the government intends to overspend on an average at the rate of about \$1 billion a month more than its revenues produce.

I should like to read a comment by one expert. This statement was made on October 20, 1975: "You can never spend more than you have, otherwise there is needless inflation." Do you know who that expert was, Mr. Speaker? It was the present Prime Minister. Yet he will be overspending this year by more than \$11 billion.

In the first hundred years of this country's existence our forefathers put it together, built railroads, opened the West, went through a depression and two world wars. The deficit in 1968 was in the area of \$32 billion. Ten years later this government had created a deficit larger than had been accumulated by our forefathers in the first hundred years. It was larger than it was at the end of the first hundred years of our history.

When is this going to stop? I pray that the comptroller general and the Auditor General will have sufficient clout to bring government spending to heel. I know one thing: members of parliament and the committee system are not able to do so. I should like to quote another expert. This is the statement he made on May 6, 1974:

This budget represents my determination to deal with inflation. It recognizes the need for all governments responsible to parliament, including this one, to restrict spending.

Do you know who that expert was, Mr. Speaker? He went to his reward as a corporate lawyer in Toronto. I am referring to the Hon. John Turner. There have been other experts in this House and I should like to quote from one of them:

Financial Administration Act

Our goals are clear. Our first objective must be to maintain the underlying trend to lower inflation.

That was said on March 31, 1977, by another person who went to his just reward in Toronto as a corporate lawyer.

An hon. Member: Not old Thumper?

Mr. Epp: Old Thumper himself, the former minister of finance. Government spokesmen have paid a great deal of lip service to the idea of restraining spending, cutting deficits, having scrupulous regard for the public purse. I am taking their words at face value. Then what happens? They do not want the estimates examined in committee. I think a medal should be struck for the minister who comes up each year with the best idea for the expenditure of public funds. The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) is here—I am sure he will get a chuckle out of this one. Does he know that under the Young Canada Works program the Canadian taxpayer spent \$15,407 on a project "to survey graveyards old and new"?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): There is a new one over there.

Mr. Epp: How can we expect people to have any confidence in the democratic process when they see these wild expenditures day after day in areas where no return can be expected? It has been estimated that it takes two dollars or three dollars of income to produce one dollar of tax revenue. Consider the volume of production in which the Canadian economy must engage to enable this kind of money to be siphoned out.

I might go on to refer to a celebrated case involving the Canada Council. Everyone familiar with the subject has heard about the Bill Bassett affair. He, along with the publishers, received funds in excess of \$100,000 to publish poetry which I am sure the average Canadian would call pornographic. I wrote to the minister, the Secretary of State (Mr. Roberts), and received the nicest letter from him in return. It said, in effect: We cannot get involved in censoring this kind of thing; we do not want to become involved in censorship. Mr. Speaker, is the Canadian taxpayer obliged to continue funding this kind of stuff, stuff I would not want to read into the record, stuff that no decent newspaper would publish? Yet when I raised this matter with the Secretary of State, pointing out that the Canadian taxpayer was insulted, not only by the material but by the fact that he was financing it, I was given the bland answer that the department could not become involved in censorship.

● (1542)

It is high time this government controlled its expenditures. Because if it does not, the democratic process will suffer very dramatically. This legacy of spending has now become a legacy of debt. I have already mentioned the amount of the increase in the national debt. By the government's own figures, 14 cents out of every dollar of tax revenue is spent to service the national debt. That is not to pay off the debt, just to service it.